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**NARRATIVE STRATEGIES IN SELECTED ANGLOPHONE AFRICAN DIASPORA  
NOVELS**

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**Narrative Strategies in Selected Anglophone African Diaspora Novels**

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Melsew Alemayehu Haregu, entitled “*Narrative Strategies in Selected Anglophone African Diaspora Novels*” and submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature in English compiles with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that “*Narrative Strategies in Selected Anglophone African Diaspora Novels*” is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been accordingly acknowledged.

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## ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the narrative strategies in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and Dinaw Mengistu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* (2007) through the lens of contemporary narrative theory. Focusing on narrative theory, the study examines how narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time strategies are employed to shape the novels' thematic and emotional impact. Narrative strategy refers to the techniques used by the author to achieve specific effects. Relying on narrative theory, the study employs a qualitative research method, utilizing textual analysis. In *Americanah*, Adichie employs a heterodiegetic narrator, using an omniscient perspective to explore characters' internal conflicts, especially regarding ideological and social issues raised in the novel. Conversely, Mengistu's novel features a homodiegetic narrator, where the protagonist himself narrates the story. This intimate perspective allows readers to deeply engage with his emotional struggles about displacement and loneliness, shaping the novel's overall atmosphere. The distinction between covert and overt narration is notable: in *Americanah*, the narrator remains mostly unknown, while the narrator in Mengistu's novel is easily noticeable, contributing to a sense of personal reflection and introspection. The second major narrative strategy analyzed is narrative level. Both novels also employ narrative embedding as a strategy. In *Americanah*, blogging serves as an embedded narrative text to raise critical issues, particularly around race. In *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, the embedded narratives are limited, often relying on traditional forms like letters. The third major narrative strategy analyzed is narrative time. Both novels utilize a nonlinear structure, dominated by analepsis, beginning in medias res. Adichie's manipulation of time underscores themes of identity, migration, and belonging, illustrating how the past continually influences the present. Similarly, in *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, the interplay between past memories and present circumstances reflects the protagonist's feelings of alienation and longing. The fluid narrative time in both novels demonstrates how past experiences shape characters' current identities and decisions. Additionally, *Americanah* makes strategic use of prolepsis to depict characters' disrupted sense of self, which contrasts with its minimal use in Mengistu's novel. In both works, almost all kinds of frequency have been used, but singulative frequency is the dominant strategy, where events are recounted once as they occurred. Overall, narrative voice and time serve as essential interpretive tools, enabling readers to engage more deeply with the novels' thematic complexities and underlying meanings.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Contemporary narrative theory began with Russian Formalism. Russian Formalists initiated a systematic examination of narrative fiction; they distinguished between the concepts of a story and way of telling the story, attempting to establish a narrative study as a scientific discipline. Narrative theory can be studied from a variety of perspectives. As Demeke (2014) explains, the development of narrative theories could be studied dividing into three main strands. For the first strand, narrative is a sequence of events, and the theorists focus on the narrative itself independent of the medium used. These are followers of the formalist Vladimir Propp (1968), the structuralists Claude Lévi-Strauss (1968), Tzvetan Todorov (1977), and early Roland Barthes (1977). The second strand sees narrative as a discourse, its representatives being the successors of Gérard Genette (1980), Mieke Bal (1985), and Seymour Chatman (1978). The final strand presents narrative as a complex artifact, the meaning of which is endowed by the receiver.

Narratives are universal phenomena. Regarding this, Barthes (1977:20) argues that narratives are found all over the world in countless forms:

Under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives..... narrative is international, trans historical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself.

As Barthes explains above, narratives exist everywhere in the world. Africa, a continent with a number of ancient, historical, cultural and spiritual traditions, has narratives that are the products of a number of languages. Thus, the subjects of the current study are novels by Nigerian and Ethiopian diaspora writers. Although the literary tradition of these countries is different, their diaspora works share related social, economic and political experiences of their migrant societies.

The prevalence of mass migration and the dispersion of people throughout the world is one of the defining issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so it is only reasonable that the economic, social, and cultural factors propelling migration would be reflected in contemporary African literature. African immigrant population has been increasing fast which makes African immigrants the fastest growing immigrant community in the United States (Taylor, 2019)

As Solomon (2007) states, the 1974 revolution drastically changed the situation of Ethiopian diaspora literature. For him, the diasporic Ethiopian literature in English emerged following the mass migration of Ethiopians all over the world following the 1974 coup. In the late 1960s, many Ethiopians migrated to various parts of the world because of the internal social and political chaos. Many people, particularly educated citizens had been forced to leave their homeland because of the political situation of the country. From these migrants, some of them started to produce works of literature based on history and their personal life experience. Then, after 1974 revolution, students, after they finished their education abroad, stopped to return home and began to challenge the government through their writings.

Whatever reform they suggested, the voice of the educated Ethiopian diaspora was not heard by the authorities at home. The only reaction that these Ethiopians made was expressing their woes through their literary works. Mesfin (2012) stated that the reactionary literary works of the Ethiopian diaspora have social, economic and political content matters which are mainly related to the condition of Ethiopia after 1974. Moreover, Endalkachew (2008) has also stated that the socio-political and historical context of the 1974 is the main literary context of most of the diasporic texts. These assertions indicate that the diasporic Ethiopian literature in English has emerged in the post 1974 revolution as a reaction to the domestic politics.

Though the situation in this year was a means of their writing, the works became mostly recognized in their publication after about three decades of their migration. Regarding this, Mesfin (2012:36) states that the decade 2000-2010 “represents the time in which Ethiopian diasporic literature seems to have come of age and saw the publication of unprecedented number of works”. Therefore, these works have been serving as informants of the country's history, setting, economy and politics. Dinaw Mengistu's novel, *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bear* (2007) could be the best example which falls under this time. Consequently, the study aims at

exploring this representative work through modern narrative strategies.

Unlike the Ethiopian literary tradition, literary history of Nigeria was basically a part of postcolonial literature which could also be termed as commonwealth literature because Nigeria was one of the commonwealth nations of the world. Commonwealth literature is a term literary critics began to use from the 1950s to describe literature in English emerging from British colonies as a result of history of colonialism. It incorporated the study of writers from the predominantly European settler communities, as well as writers belonging to those countries which were in the process of gaining independence from British rule, such as those from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asian nations. Basically, scholars categorize Nigerian literature under three generations. Roger Kurtz (2012:24) has outlined the generation as follows:

The first generation consists of writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Flora Nwapa and others. The second generation includes names such as Femi Osofisan, Buchi Emecheta and Tanure Ojaide. The third generation comprises of those who were born and educated in 1960 and whose writings began to appear in the mid 1980's. They include Ben Okri, Helen Oyeyemi, Helen Habila, Seffie Atta, Chimamanda Adichie and others.

Similarly, Nigerian writer and researcher Helen Habila (2011:7) leveled Adichie as “the third generation of influential and representative African female writer”. Adichie seems to have heeded the call by Achebe to march right in front and re-educate especially in the area of ownership and authorship of the African story. Adichie belongs to a group of writers described as the third generation of modern Nigerian Literature. Adichie and her peers have found a platform to speak through their writing. They are able to experiment with new avenues of expressing and formulating the African experience.

This paper uses the term “narrative strategy” to investigate the selected notions of narratology. A narrative strategy here refers to a device or technique that an author uses to transmit a theme, subject or message. Novelists usually use a variety of narrative strategies in constructing their texts. Such narrative strategies include narrative voice, focalization, narrative time, narrative levels, and speech and thought representation. These strategies are artistically used by novelists

to convey the story and to achieve a certain effect on the implied reader(s) (Mackay, 2011:39-40). The main argument, as Chatman (1978:30) explains, is that novelists deliberately deploy specific narrative strategies “to achieve certain effects in the reader”. Roston (2006:5) shares the above idea when defining the term as “the strategies where by [the novels] achieve their effects”. Thus, narrative strategies are techniques which are strongly linked with the goal of the narrative (why the story is told in such a way). It mainly focuses on the effect it transfers from using that specific technique.

It is interesting to note that the term narrative strategy has not been widely used in narrative studies. Nonetheless, few scholars have conducted narrative studies using this terminology. Demeke (2014:22) in his dissertation treats form as a narrative strategy which is employed in a literary text with “the writer’s skillful maneuver to motivate the meaning of the texts at the textual and contextual levels”. Shen (2006) is another scholar who used the term in his dissertation to explore the reciprocal relationship between Cormier’s narrative techniques and his treatment of controversial themes in his young adult fictions. Rahman’s (2001) article also considers form in a more encompassing conception of narrative strategy including choice of protagonists and secondary characters, linearity or non-linearity in structure, setting, and voice or mode of storytelling. In addition, Patrycja Koziel’s (2015) article discusses the writer’s use of Igbo language as a narrative strategy to manifest migrant identity.

From these works, we can conclude that there is a possibility of using this terminology, i.e., narrative strategy, in narrative researches. Different researchers use the term in the way they need to address. Therefore, in the present research, narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time are accepted as narrative strategies of telling a story, and how these strategies succeed to emphasize the themes of Ngozi Adiche’s and Dinaw Mengistu’s diaspora novels.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Diaspora fictions mostly narrate the experiences of migrants before and after their migration. Especially, as Nigiste (2016) states, Ethiopian diaspora fictions are mostly biographies or autobiographies of their respective authors. The similarity of authors' biographies with the experiences of major characters in both targeted novels strengthens the idea. The major characters, Ifemelu, in *Americanah* (2013) and Estifanos in *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* (2007) have similar life experiences with their respective authors of the novels.

In many aspects, the authors' lives and that of their protagonists often parallel. Like Ifemelu, Adichie immigrated to the U.S. at the age of nineteen to acquire education. She later transferred to Eastern Connecticut State University to live with her sister, who had a medical practice in Coventry. While at the University of Nigeria, Adichie edited *The Compass*, a Magazine run by the university's Catholic medical students. She received a bachelor's degree from Eastern Connecticut State University in 2001. Adichie went for further education in 2003 and completed a master's degree in creative writing at John Hopkins University. Thus, she wrote the novel based on the stories which are closely related to her life experiences. She confirmed this truth during the 2017 PEN World Voices Festival as "it's very familiar to me; it's the story of the people I know and love" (30:10-30:20). She affirms the importance of her decision to write about this time period during the 2017 PEN World Voices Festival:

With *Americanah*, the story called me...I want to write this contemporary thing about love obviously, but also it's the kind of African immigration that I am familiar with. Because I think that the narrative that is common in the Western world about African immigrants is that they are fleeing poverty and war and catastrophe, and obviously those stories are important, but it never feels familiar to me because that's not the story I know. And I wanted to write about the people who are not dying, who haven't been caught up in any war, who are dreaming of more. And for whom more is America." (29:01-29:43)

Adichie wrote *Americanah* using her own experiences as a transnational individual to shape conflicted characters. She and many of the people she loves faced the complexities of identity formation in the liminal space between nations. *Americanah* demonstrates her understanding of how migrants find a sense of belonging. She continues in the PEN World Voices interview to explain more about this type of character who makes the choice to leave and discover how immigration shapes who you are and your relationship with your peers.... (30:10-30:20).

The same is true with Dianaw Mengistu and Stephanos. Dinaw Mengestu and Sepha Stephanos share many points of similarity, from their Ethiopian heritage and immigrant experiences in America to their feelings of displacement and alienation. Both Mengestu and Sepha are Ethiopian immigrants living in the United States, and both grapple with the complex realities of trying to find a place in a foreign land. In the novel, Estifanos, the protagonist of the story, struggles with feelings of alienation, loneliness, and disconnection from both his Ethiopian roots and American society. Similarly, Mengestu has spoken in interviews about the challenges of navigating his Ethiopian identity and his American upbringing, offering insights into the duality of living between two cultures (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzcmX6VpEXQ>)

Thus, the person who speaks his/her experiences (the narrator), the time when the story happened, and the way these stories packaged become significant points in examining diaspora prose narratives. In this regard, the concepts of narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time are the important elements to approach diaspora fictions, and could be focusing areas for diaspora literary studies.

As the present researcher has attempted to look for, it is a difficult task to find diaspora researches in which their focus is on narrative strategies. Mostly, the focuses of the studies are on thematic issues-social, economic and political concerns raised in the novels. Not only for researches on narrative strategies, getting literary studies especially on Ethiopian diaspora fictions, is not also a simple task.

Mesfin (2012:26) states the case as: “except few recent studies and few reviews on some publications in Europe and North America, there have not been other critical studies that focused

exclusively on writings of the Ethiopian diaspora”. Endalkachew (2008), in his thesis, also stated that it has been difficult to find research works on Ethiopian diaspora literature at Addis Ababa University. However, it doesn’t mean that Ethiopian diaspora literary works are totally forgotten by researchers. Few PhD dissertations and some MA theses and articles have been done on the area. However, all of them focus on the thematic or social values of diaspora literary works.

The case seems better on Adiche’s *Americanah*. Unlike Dinaw’s work, finding research articles on Adiche’s *Americanah* is not difficult. But the gap is that most works are dependent on its thematic issues; treating the novel from its employment of narrative strategies is a forgotten task. As can be witnessed from their biographies, these diaspora writers are very influential novelists of the time. They have been selected for many literary awards and become a subject of many literary articles and book reviews. And also, their works are well known and praised in different literary circles in contemporary African literature.

The reasons for their awards are the nature of their novels including their craftsmanship. This shows that they are influential novelists who can attract many literary scholars. In addition, although it is from different perspectives, i.e., thematically focused studies, the researcher found that these novels attract the attention of different literary researchers. Based on this assumption, the researcher believes that their employment of diverse narrative strategies in writing their fictions is an important aspect for the analysis of narrative strategies in their works.

Although an interest in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's and Dinaw Mengistu’s growing works continues to increase, studies on issues of structure and narrative strategy remains limited. For several reasons, the bulk of criticism of their works remains slanted towards ideological and thematic concerns.

The present researcher contends that thematic presentation and the choice of narrative strategies are interconnected and should be equally prioritized when analyzing literary works. When literature is examined within its literary, social, and ideological contexts, the author's selection of narrative techniques significantly contributes to the development of the story.

Having this concept in mind, the researcher has noticed that there is a gap in analyzing African diaspora fictions through modern narratological perspectives. Now a day, diaspora novels have

gained significant attention among literary scholars. Beyond the message they convey, the strategies employed to present these themes have also influenced the academic discourse. Consequently, the present study tries to explore facts and events about how the selected narrative strategies are constructed in the selected African diaspora novels in English.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

At the end, the findings of the study would answer the following questions:

- Who is telling the story?
- How is the story packaged?
- How is narrative time handled in the story?
- How does the author's use of the selected narrative strategies contribute to the interpretation of events in the story?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to explore the narrative strategies in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's and Dinaw Mengistu's selected novels through the critical lens of contemporary narrative theory.

More specifically, the study aims at:

- Identifying the author's choice of speaker (narrator) and degrees of participation in each novel;
- Identifying the relations of narrators to the story (the levels with their relationship) in the novels;
- Interpreting how narrative time (order, duration and frequency) are employed in the story and discourse times of the novels;
- Analyzing how the selected narrative strategies separately and in coordination contribute to the interpretation of the events in the novels.

## **1.5 Scope of the Study**

Among different notions of narratology, the study is delimited only to narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time in two Anglophone African diaspora novels, i.e., Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and Dinaw Mengistu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* (2007). As Bal (1985:19) noted, the narrator is the most central concept in the analysis of narrative text, narrative voice, which addresses the question "who speaks or who is telling the story" is a basic concept in the study of narrative fictions. Thus, it should be examined as a distinct narrative strategy. Regarding narrative time, as Nigiste (2016) states, most diaspora writers wrote their own experiences in which their novels are either biographical or autobiographical narratives. They mainly focus on migrants' experiences happened in a certain period of time before and after their migration. Thus, examining how these significant times (before and after their migration) has been narrated in the novels becomes important to approach diaspora fictions through the theory of narrative time. It is to mean that the experiences of the narrators and the time of the narratives play a significant role in the study of diaspora fictions in modern narratological approaches. Hence, the study is limited to the selected narrative strategies in the selected African diaspora novels in English.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Undertaking such kinds of research has a greater importance and contribution. It mainly helps individuals who read literary texts to understand or comprehend, analyze and appreciate literary works especially novels. More specifically, the study will play a pivotal role for students of literature since learning and applying modern narrative strategies help them to create awareness on how to understand and analyze a literary text. In addition, it will help critics and teachers of literature to examine prose narratives based on the concept of modern narrative strategies. Moreover, the findings of the study will be used as a reference material for those individuals who are interested to conduct a research on the same area of study.

## **1.7 Methodology of the Study**

### **1.7.1 Methods and Data Analysis Procedure**

The study basically employs textual analysis, which is a qualitative study in its nature. Concurrently, theories by the aforementioned scholars in the following chapter of this paper have been reviewed to establish a framework that focuses on the theoretical foundations of the selected narrative strategies. Using this framework, significant extracts from the novels are organized, categorized, described, analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated. Since the study emphasizes only on employment of the narrative strategies in understanding diaspora fiction rather than the authors' personal views on their works, interviews with the authors were not planned. However, data from various interviews and talks by the authors have been incorporated to support specific arguments. The analysis employs both comparative and contrastive approaches to examine the texts.

The main objective of this analysis is not to compare the two novels but to examine how the selected narrative strategies are employed in each. While a fully comparative study would have been ideal given the inclusion of two novels, the research focus evolved over time. Initially, at the proposal stage, the study was designed to analyze four African diasporic novels. However, based on feedback from my examiners during the upgrading phase, the scope was adjusted to include only two novels.

### **1.7.2 Bases of Text Selection**

Regarding the novels under study, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and Dinaw Mengistu's *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears* (2007) are purposively selected for the present study. Basically, the selection criterion is related to suitability of the novels to the theoretical perspective of this research. Adiche's use of blogs in *Americanah*, for instance, is very important element to examine narrative voice especially narrative levels. Unlike in other diaspora novels, the novel is full of embedded narratives which are narrated by different narrators. As the advancement of technology has significantly changed the mode of communication, people have turned to the use digital medias to express opinions on significant issues. Likewise, Adichie's use of the blogosphere as a narrative strategy in *Americanah* is in keeping with the situation which goes along with readers' interest.

In addition, the diversity of their narration is a significant element for novels' selection. Adiche's novel is narrated by third person narrator where as Dinaw's novel is narrated by first person narrator. This difference of narrators helps the researcher to analyze the first narrative strategy, narrative voice, from different narrative situations, i.e., to study the narrative instance as heterodiegetic and homodiegetic, or narrator's perceptibility as covert and overt narrators.

The other reason to select the novels is that the researcher believes these works can be representative of the contemporary African diaspora fictions. These are written within a decade when Ethiopian and Nigerian diaspora literature got many representative works. Mesfin (2012:36) strengthens the idea expressing the decade 2000-2010 as "the time in which Ethiopian diasporic literature seems to have come of age and saw the publication of unprecedented number of works". Similarly, Pandurang and Bartels (2010:6) states that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, out of the contemporary women writers, could be called truly the "voice of a twenty first century Nigerian woman and is placed by critics as the third generation African women writers". Thus, these novels can be representative works of the present emigrants who migrate to other countries because of different factors, and for different reasons.

Ashcroft et al. (1998: 68) defines Diaspora as "the voluntary or forcible movements of people from their homelands into new regions. Since they migrate in their childhood, some diasporas are not aware of the reasons of their move, while others may be based on their interest to move abroad for different reasons. In this case, whatever the case they have, diasporas themselves are responsible for their decision.

The protagonists of the selected novels represent these both types of diasporas, i.e. diasporas who take responsibility for their decision to migrate (voluntary diasporas), and those who know nothing about the case (forcible diasporas). In this case, Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) represent those diasporas who move to other countries, notably to USA and Europe, based on their interest or motives. We get Ifemelu going to America for scholarship, and her boyfriend Obinze heads to England due to rejection from post 9/11 stringent immigration policies in America. He travels on a tourist visa but extends his stay illegally. Eventually he is discovered and deported to Nigeria. In the novel, Adichie records the life of Ifemelu, a young, middle-class, educated Nigerian girl.

The author employs a non-linear narrative scheme which follows Ifemelu through her childhood and adolescence in Lagos, to her brief studies at the university in Nsukka and her subsequent journey to the United States of America in order to complete her education.

Dinaw's *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears* (2007), on the other hand, represents diasporas who had been taken to different countries unknowingly during their childhood. Stephanos, the protagonist of the novel, moved to USA when he was two years old because of his father's murder in Ethiopia. The character narrator in the novel stated this as "I didn't leave Ethiopia to attend classes in the northern suburbs of Virginia" (98). The difference in the economic status of the protagonists can also represent today's diasporas who experienced the same with these characters' lives. It is noted that, unlike Dinaw's Stephanos, Ifemelu's ability in Adichie's novel to travel to the United States suggests that she is from a wealthy and respectable upper/middle class Nigerian family.

However, in addition to their difference in different aspects stated above, the protagonists in both novels also share common experiences. The basic reason of their migration and the challenges they face in their host country, for instance, is almost similar. Both of them went to USA because of maladministration happened in their respective countries. Ifemelu's and Stepha's life is a story about courage and dedication in the face of difficult challenges, and both protagonists went through several obstacles primarily because of their racial backgrounds.

It is important to understand that one of Ifemelu's reasons for immigrating to the U.S for education is because of the incessant teachers' strikes in the Nigerian educational system, which is very detrimental to students' learning and progress. Commenting on this, the narrator in the novel argues that in Nigerian universities, "strikes now were common... campuses were emptied, classrooms drained of life. Everyone was talking about leaving." (91). The moments that define Ifemelu's life are her relationship with Obinze, her high school sweetheart and the decision to leave him and Nigeria due to the ongoing uncertainties caused by the governmental crisis in the decades following the Biafran war. Similarly, Stephanos's move to USA is because of his father's death and uncertainties following the government change in Ethiopia.

Their life in their host country after is also quite similar. In whatever reason they went off their homeland, both of them faced challenges, and forced to live in difficult situations because of their racial background. Race, loneliness, discrimination, and other themes of diaspora literary works are also noticed in the novels.

## **1.8 Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter begins with the introduction which includes background, statement, objectives, significance and delimitation of the study. It gives brief information on what, why and how of the entire work. Chapter Two is dedicated to review of related literatures. In this chapter, studies related to both on the selected narrative strategies on the targeted novels together with their similarities and differences with the present study have been reviewed. The next chapter focuses on the discussion of the theoretical frameworks of the study. It gives a clear insight on narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time, and discussions on how contextual narratology is applied in these selected novels have been addressed.

The next three chapters i.e., chapter Four, chapter Five and chapter Six are dedicated to the analysis of the targeted narrative strategies, i.e., narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time, respectively. In these chapters, sample extracts are critically analyzed based on the theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter Three. The last chapter of the study is chapter Seven which comprises conclusion and recommendation of the study. Here, major findings of the study have been summarized, and recommendations for further studies have been forwarded.

## **1.9 Operational Definitions**

**Narrative:** is defines narrative as anything that tells or presents a story (Jahn, 2005)

**Narrator:** is the speaker or 'voice' of the narrative discourse (Genette 1980: 186)

**Narrative Strategy:** is a use of certain narrative techniques and practices to achieve a certain goal (Valerij Tjupa, 2014:1)

**Narrative Voice:** is the speaker or voice of the narrative discourse (Genette ,1980:186)

**Homodiegetic narrator:** is the other with the narrator present as a character in the story s/he tells (Genette 1980)

**Heterodiegetic Narrator:** the narrator absent from the story s/he tells (Genette, 1980)

**Extradiegetic narrator:** the narrator is above or superior to the story s/he narrates (Genette 1980:248)

**Intradiegetic Narrator:** the narrator is inside the fictional world created by the story (Genette 1980:248)

So far, the discussions in this chapter have primarily focused on clarifying the "why" and "how" of the study. It outlined the reasons behind undertaking the research, defined its objectives, delineated its scope, described the methods employed for texts' selection and analysis, and explaining the terms related in this specific study. The following chapter is a review of related studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter focuses on two main areas of review. It starts with a discussion of previous studies on the selected narrative strategies, followed by a review of researches related to the novels under study, which helps to identify the gap this study aims to address.

#### 2.1 Review of Related Studies on the Selected Narrative Strategies

Like on Ethiopian diaspora novels, researches on modern narrative theories on Ethiopian fictions are rare; especially literary researches on narrative strategies of Ethiopian diaspora novels are limited in number. As far as the present researcher has attempted to look for, there is only one MA thesis in one of Dinaw's novels in Mekelle University; the others are on Amharic fictions. The following is the list of narrative researches on Ethiopian fictions.

The first is a PhD dissertation by Yideg (2009) entitled "Approaching Prose Narratives with Modern Narrative Theories of Voice and Focalization". The selected novels of his study are Fikre Markos Desta's *Land of the Yellow Bull* (2003) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Yideg, in his study, gives more comprehensive review of post classical narrative theories especially on narrative voice and focalization. His review helps literature students to understand the complicated concepts of narratology easily. After exhaustively discussing the above elements of narratology, the study has put the following findings. In both novels, the authors employed hetero-diegetic authorial-figural narrator to tell, and both narrators are sexually indeterminate. Unlike *Land of the Yellow Bull*, inside the overall matrix, there are seven embedded narratives which are narrated by intra diegetic narrators in *Things Fall Apart*. All narrators in both novels are heterodiegetic in relation to the story they relate.

The present study is different from the above. First, the focus of the Yideg's (2009) PhD study is approaching prose narratives through modern narrative theories of voice and focalization whereas the present study focuses on how narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time are constructed in selected diaspora novels. Second, Yideg's targeted novels are different in genre

from the present study, i.e., ethnographic and diasporic novels respectively.

Demeke's (2014) PhD dissertation on "Narrative Strategies in Selected Amharic Novels from 2000 until 2010" is another study in which the present study shares the same title. The objective of the study says "to shed light on the relationship among form, meaning (content) and social milieu in establishing the textual and contextual features of fictional narratives"(Demeke, 2014:18). It mainly contends that it is possible to unravel the textual and contextual qualities of fictional narratives by studying form as a narrative strategy. Finally, the study found that the present time Amharic novels are characterized by their egoistic characters, loose narrators and socially connected authors.

Except the similarity of the title "narrative strategy", Demeke's research is different from the present study. First, the novels under study are different both in their language and genre. And also, it separately treats each novel in a single strategy, i.e., story, focalization and characterization as narrative strategies in *Yeburka Zimta* (2000), *Giracha Kachiloch* (2005), and *Dertogada* (2009), respectively. Thus, neither the targeted narrative strategies nor the selected novels are similar with the present study.

The most related work to the present research is Gedefaw's (2012) MA thesis on "Narrative Time in "The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears". The study aims at examining order, duration and frequency of events in the novel. Using the theories of post classical narratologists, the study treats these three facets of time analysis. Finally, it has come to the conclusion that narrative time serves as a guide for interpretation and helps readers to better understand the novel's complexities and its overall meaning. Here, since above research is delimited only on a single novel (The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears) and a single area (narrative time), the present study is different as it is more inclusive in both cases. In addition, the above thesis is mainly focused on describing the facets of narrative time, and showing the appropriate extract which fits to the theory. It doesn't go to the effect of using that specific narrative strategy for the development of the story.

There are also two PhD dissertations in Addis Ababa University which share the same are with the present study. The first one is a study by Assefa Mekonnen (2020) entitled "Narrative Voice and Time in Selected Amharic Novels (ca 1991-2014): A Comaparative Analysis." Applying

Genette's theories of voice and time in line with Rimmon-Kenan's theories of voice, the study examines the application of Narrative Voice and Narrative Time in selected four Amharic novels published from 1991 to 2014 in order to identify newly introduced narrative techniques. The result of the study shows that two novels namely 'Märäq' and 'Därəso Mäləs' are homodiegetic novels, while 'Mikəlöl: Yämäčal Mizan' and 'Ramatohara' are heterodiegetic novels. It also indicates that multiple narrators are employed in 'Märäq and Därəso Mäləs', while there are omniscient narrators in 'Mikəlöl: Yämäčal Mizan' and 'Ramatohara.' Due to the absence of the signals of unreliability, which are the narrators' limitation of knowledge, personal involvement and problematic value scheme, the narrator in Mikəlöl: Yämäčal Mizan is less reliable whereas the narrator in Ramatohara is extremely reliable. In terms of narrative time, the events within the self-contained narratives in Märäq are presented chronologically and the analepses in the novel provide background information of the characters and causes for the later effects, or explain the motivation for characters' actions. Moreover, the novel 'Märäq' is new in presenting self-contained narratives that have no strong connections.

Bezabhe's (2020) PhD study on the title "Adapting Feature Films from Amharic Prose Narratives: Narrative Strategies in Focus" is another study which share the same area on the narrative strategies. The objective of this study was to explore and analyze three narrative strategies namely narrative time, voice and focalization in adapting Amharic feature films from Amharic prose narratives. The study is conducted on two Amharic adapted films from two Amharic prose narratives. The two adapted films are *Yenegən Alweldim* by Abreham Gezahagn and *Kalkidan* by Shimles Abera and the two source prose narratives are *EHAPA ena Sport* by Gene Mekuira and *Kalkidan* by Getachew Ayalkie. Applying narrative theory, the study found out that the three narrative strategies are transferred from the source prose narratives to the adapted films and thus these narrative strategies transcend the boundary between genre and medium distinctions. Finally, the study also found out that these narrative strategies are omnipresent in all of the four texts in spite of their difference in genre and medium.

It is true that the two dissertations mentioned above share a common focus with the present study in terms of the narrative strategies they explore. However, the present study differs significantly in its objectives. Firstly, while the previous studies focus on Amharic novels, the current research examines African diasporic fiction. Secondly, Bezabhe's study primarily investigates how

selected narrative strategies are employed in both fiction and film, whereas Assefa's research compares the use of narrative voice and time in Amharic novels. Therefore, although there is an overlap in the exploration of narrative strategies, the present study is distinct in both its purpose and the literary works it analyzes.

## **2.2 Review of Related Studies on the Selected Novels**

As stated on the first chapter of this paper, the number of narrative studies on African diaspora novels is rare. Adiche's *Americanah* attracts many researchers to treat it from different approaches. However, little attention has been given to study the novel from modern narratological perspectives. As the present researcher looks for, among plenty of studies on the novel, there are only few journal articles in which their focus is on modern narratological concerns.

The first is an article by Patrycja Kozieł (2015), which shares the same title with the present study entitled "Narrative Strategy in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novel, "Americanah": the Manifestation of Migrant Identity". In this study, the paper examines the characteristics of narrative strategy used in the novel with special reference to Igbo language. The paper provides examples of several expressions in Igbo taken from the novel such as phrases, sentences, proverbs and other lexical items.

Taking this into consideration, the study found that Igbo language plays a vital role in Adichie's writing process as well as English and in the globalized world which are crucial part of migrant identities formation. According to the study, analysis of her narrative strategy in reference to languages gives the opportunity to see the constant need for reconsideration of a fluid and dynamic identity. The novel may act as an example of polyphony and illustration of Adichie's awareness of contemporary global phenomena as well as her open attitude toward deploying linguistic flexibility and creative skills to reflect controversial and shifting social practices and postmodern tendencies in global literature.

As can be seen above, it is true that the above article shares the same title with the present study. However, they are different in the way of approaching the concept of narrative strategies. The above study specifically referenced the writer's use of Igbo language as a narrative strategy to

manifest migrant identity in the novel, whereas the present study uses narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time as a narrative strategy to understand diaspora concerns in the novel. Thus, their intension is different.

Kubasu's (2012) thesis entitled "The Art of Narrative Embedding in Chimamanda Adichie's fictions" is the second study on the novel. Together with other novels by the same author, i.e., *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of A Yellow Sun* (2006), and *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), the study draws upon Russian Formalism to examine the novels. Finally, the study observes that Adichie effectively uses the embedded narrative to communicate on the themes of race, identity, and the subtle sexual exploitation of women, war and the question of the authorship, the ownership of the African story and the dangers of an attitude of silence. Here, this research specifically examines how the previously mentioned themes of diasporic literature are portrayed within the embedded narratives. In contrast, the present study takes a broader approach by analyzing three narrative strategies across two diasporic novels. Additionally, while the former study applies Russian formalism as its theoretical framework, the present study adopts contemporary narrative theory. Overall, the distinction lies in both focus and theoretical approach, as the former centers solely on embedded texts and employs Russian formalism, whereas the latter takes a more comprehensive perspective.

In addition to the above studies, the following are also some PhD and MA theses on the same novel. However, none of them are related to the narrative strategies, rather they are focused on the thematic issues raised. The first is a PhD dissertation on "Fictional World of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: A Thematic Study of Selected Works" by Kirti Jha in 2016. The study attempted to critically analyze the major thematic concerns in Adiche's fictional works, namely, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of A Yellow Sun* (2006), *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) and *Americanah* (2013). Thus, the study becomes evident that thematic concerns like gender violence, challenges of an immigrant, metamorphosed women and girls, aggressive identity concerns and postmodern features loom large in Adichie's fictional works. However, after a comprehensive exploration of Adichie's writings, it concludes that she is "a conscientious black woman diaspora writer, and the identity of a black woman forms the axial center of her fictional world and the subsidiary thematic concerns revolve around it" (Kirti Jha, 2016: 226).

Wabende Nabututu's (2014) MA thesis entitled "A Stylistic Approach to Chimamanda Adichie's work: A Case Study of *Americanah*" is another study on the novel. This study aims at investigating features of style in the novel. It focuses on identification of features of style in line with contemporary stylistics, and the analysis of the same features through graphological, syntactic and semantic levels. Through the identification of stylistic features, this work demonstrates that there is a need for stylisticians to identify features that define sociolinguistic code, the use of point of view, transitivity, features that define the textual structure as well as intertextuality. This study also demonstrates that stylistic theory captures the milieu of semantic realization through the identified features for example point of view.

Koskei Margaret Chepkorir's (2014) MA thesis is another study which focused on African feminism entitled "Representation of Female African Immigrant Experience in the West: a Case Study of Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*." This research set out to interrogate the challenges faced by female African immigrants as reflected in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. It also set out to compare and contrast the male and female experience of African immigrants in the West while analyzing the author's vision on African immigrants. By using African feminism as a theoretical framework, the study reveals that the interconnectedness between race, gender and class issues pose a major challenge for female African immigrants as reflected through racism, stereotyping, economic pressure and male domination.

So far, the related studies on Adichie's *Americanah* with their similarities and differences have been reviewed. The following is the review of related studies on Dinaw's novel. Like the previous diaspora novel by Adichie, together with other Ethiopian diaspora novels, some researchers consider the Dinaw Mengistu's novel *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears* (2007) in their selections. First, the novel has been selected in Nigistie's (2016) article which aims at exploring the common features that Ethiopian diaspora novels share using the selected narratives as a frame of reference with some relevant background information. The finding of the study discusses that the novels have commonalities in setting, narration, voice, content, way of presentation, and theme. Taking narration as a commonality in the novels, the article argues that the novels have a straight forward plot. There is just a single major story and that gets told from the very exposition to its denouement/ resolution, and virtually no broken up plot is employed.

And the narration takes place in chronological order; the stories are presented one after the other in the narratives as per their historical occurrence in the real societal context. The present research is different from the above because the latter is not deep; it lacks to show how these areas of narration are exploited in the novels. And also, it treats the novels through traditional approaches of narration like setting and theme.

In addition, the present study has tried to disprove the finding of this article regarding its way of narration. Unlike Nigiste's (2012) article which concludes that the narration takes place in chronological order as per their historical occurrence, the present study finds that narration of the novel varies its movement back and forth out of their natural occurrence; analepsis plays a crucial role in the novel's storytelling. The protagonist frequently revisits his life in Ethiopia, his father's tragic death, and his flight from political instability.

Mesfin's (2012) PhD dissertation, which aims at discovering and critically assessing the themes of these works, also considers the novel as one of his Eight Ethiopian diaspora fictions. From the various details of the study, the study has come up with five major themes as: disillusionment with various aspects and in various forms, a visit to the past (painful past memories), racial discrimination, along with conflict of identity and isolation, interest or involvement in homeland state of affairs, and social and psychological trauma of immigrants. He also stated that racial discrimination, conflict or crisis of identity, and a revisit of the past (past memories) are given emphasis in the novel.

Endalkachew (2008), in his MA thesis, has also taken the novel as one of the targeted works to analyze the psychological, economic and socio-cultural predicaments of the diaspora. With regard to the woes in the homeland, political woes are taken as the major issues reflected in the novel. Thus, the study asserts that the migrants are transformed from some types of woes to other types of woes, namely disillusionment, frustration, emptiness, homesickness, racism and discrimination in both novels. Here, the present study is different from the above studies. As the objectives show, both of them focused on the socio-political themes of the selected works.

Generally, we can notice that the above review of previous works conducted on both novels reveals the fact that the trend in African diaspora literary scholarship is dominated by context

based approaches. From the review made in the above section, what we grasp as a general feature of African diaspora works is that they have been the mirrors to the life of the society from which they migrate. Writers have been the spokesperson of their society as they reflect its socio-cultural and political outlooks and criticize the socio-political systems of their respective times through their writings.

However, it is the researcher's argument that the societal significance of the literary works should not be magnified at the expense of author's strategies to write. As we observed in the previous review, though most of the research works thoroughly reveal the representation of socio-political issues in the literary works; they lack to evaluate them from modern narratological perspectives.

All in all, as the reviews of the previous works show, the present study is different from the above researches both in objective and type. Unlike the intention of the present study, they focused on thoroughly revealing the representation of socio political issues in the literary works. Since they are obsessed with thematic and biographical discussions, they do not treat the narratological features of the works in a strict sense. Accordingly, the researcher argues that "what" and "how" of a fictional story are integrated so that both should be studied in integration in literary studies. In line with this, different scholars of narratology equally give credit for story and discourse. Chatman (1975) and Genette (1980), for example, gave the title of their books as "Story and Discourse" and "Narrative Discourse" respectively. This shows that the content of the work (story) and the ways of presenting the work (discourse) are the integrated areas of fictional writings. Consequently, the present study focuses on exploring how the selected narrative strategies are employed and managed in understanding the socio-political issues in the selected novels. Thus, this study attempts to fill the gap by examining the use of the selected narrative strategies in the selected works.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter is a review of theoretical frameworks on the targeted narrative strategies discussed by different narrative theoreticians. The theoretical orientations of this research are derived from narrative theory. The important narrative concepts, narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time are the major dimensions of the theoretical framework. Thus, it bases on the review that combines Genette (1980) and his followers in combination with subsequent revisions and modifications suggested by later narratologists. The definitions and classifications are based on Genette (1980), Stanzel (1984), Chatman (1978), Rimmon-Kenan (2002), Toolan (1988) and Jahn (2005). Before delving into the discussion of the targeted strategies, it is essential to first review the foundational concepts of narrative theory and its scope. This overview provides clarity on what narrative theory entails and the elements it encompasses.

#### **3.1 Narrative Theory**

David Herman (2007: 11-14) points out that the development of narrative theory can be placed in two major phases. The first one is the classical narrative theory and the second one is the post classical narrative theory. Classical narrative theory is the initial stage of narrative theory that evolved from formalism and structuralism. In Genette's (1980:8) foreword, Jonathan Culler points out that "narrative theory is one of the central achievements of structuralism". Indeed, at its inception in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, classical narratology was a branch of structuralism. Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov and Gerard Genette are among the early scholars who undertook a structuralist study of literature (Demeke, 2014).

They sought not to interpret literature but to investigate its structures and devices. They were less concerned with developing a poetics that would explain what individual works mean. Instead, they attempted to explicate the system of figures and conventions that enable works to have the forms and meanings they do. Classical narratology was originally meant to analyze a narrative structure scientifically (Chatman, 1978). Subsequently, its main objective was to establish the basic elements that constitute a given narrative and how the art of narration is undertaken.

Classical narrative theory is thus more oriented on “textual analysis as opposed to contextual analysis of narratives’ (Jahn, 2005: N2.1.3).

The term narratology, as a discipline, was introduced by Todorov (1969), who argued for a shift in focus from the surface level of text-based narrative (i.e. concrete discourse as realized in the form of letters, words and sentences) to the general, logical and structural properties of narrative. Todorov calls for a new type of generalizing theory that could be applied to all domains of narrative, and for a hypothetical science; he calls it narratology, or science of narrative (Onega and Landa, 1996).

Bal (2009:9) defines narratology as “the theory of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events; cultural artifacts that 'tell a story.' Such a theory helps to understand, analyze, and evaluate narratives”. Jahn (2005) also defines narratology as the theory of the structure of narrative to examine a structure, or present a structural description. Therefore, we can say that narratology is a field of study or a science which studies about narratives. Hence, narratives are the objects of narratology. According to Jahn (2005), a narrative is a form of communication, which presents a sequence of events experienced by characters. Thus, narration is the process of presenting the narrative, which occurs because of the narrative strategies. Narrative includes different forms of literary genres: fictions, ancient epics, novels, short stories, etc. Abrams (1999:173) states that narrative is found in both prose and verse:

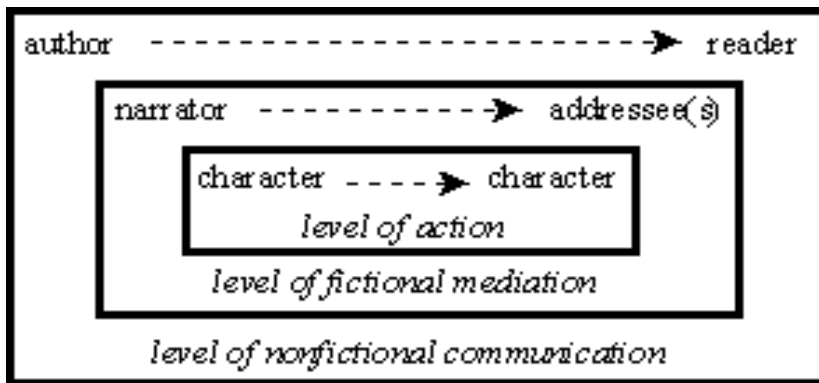
A narrative is a story whether told in prose or verse, involving story events, characters, and what the characters say and do. Some literary forms such as novel and short story in prose; and the epic and romance in verse are explicitly narratives that are told by a narrator.

Supporting this, Jahn (2005) defines narrative as anything that tells or presents a story, be it by text, picture, performance, or a combination of these. Therefore, novels, plays, films, etc., are narratives. Thus, narration can be explained as a recounting of events, episodes, series of facts and what the characters say and do in the discourse.

Narration covers a number of related areas of concerns in the narrative. It is closely related with narrative voice, which determines a set of consistent features regarding the way through which the story is communicated to the audience; narrative levels which focuses on how the stories in the text are packaged; narrative time, which determines the use of tense and the arrangement and presentation of time sequences in a narrative; narrative point of view, which determines through whose perspective the story is viewed; speech and thought representation of narrators, narrative modes, the ways how narratives are presented, etc. Among these elements, the present study focuses on narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time in selected African Anglophone diaspora novels.

### 3.2 Narrative Communication

Any communication has its own agents- addressers and addressees. As is shown in the following diagram, literary narrative communication involves the interplay of at least three communicative levels (Chatman, 1978:151; Jahn, 2005: N1.7.; Schmid, 2010:35). Each level of communication comes with its own set of addressers and addressees (also 'senders' and 'receivers'). Chatman's (1978: 151) clearly depicts these participants and the world they belong to as:



This model distinguishes between the levels of action, fictional mediation, and nonfictional communication, and establishes useful points of reference for key terms like *author*, *reader*, *narrator*, and *narratee/addressee*. Each level of communication comes with its own set of addressers and addressees (Coste, 1989; Keen, 2003:32-33; Schmid, 2010:35). The first one is the non-fictional communicative level involving the real author and the real reader.

In each linguistic communication, the two entities appear in two modes, as concrete and abstract (Schmid, 2010:35). The concrete author, the real historical figure is not part of the work but exists independently. Similarly, the concrete reader exists outside and independently of the work. This is not just one reader but an unending mass of people. These readers are located in specific places and at some point in time that have already read or are yet to read. The rationale of locating the real author(s) and real reader(s) at the “non-fictional” communication level is because they do communicate within the fictional text. However, though absent physically in the fictional text, the real author and reader(s) are present conceptually. This point is captured by Schmid (2010:36) who points out that every linguistic expression contains an implicit picture of its creator and also its addressee. Additionally, there exist two 'intra-textual' communication levels. One is the level of narrative mediation or narrative discourse. At this level, a fictional first-person narrator plays the role of the narrator. The second one is the action level which is captured in dialogues and conversations involving characters in a fictional text.

The authors of the targeted novels for this study are presently living in USA. They are definitely different from the textual entity that readers reconstruct by reading their novels. Similarly, the concrete readers exist outside and independently of the work. This is not just one reader but an unending mass of people. These readers are located in specific places and at some point in time that have already read or are yet to read.

Additionally, there exist two 'intra-textual' communication levels. One is the level of narrative mediation or 'narrative discourse'. At this level, a fictional first-person narrator plays the role of the narrator. The second one is the action level which is captured in dialogues and conversations involving characters in a fictional text. This latter level is called level of action because speech acts are not categorically different from other acts (Austin, 1962 [1955], Searle 1974 [1969]).

Some theorists add another intermediate level of implied fictional communication (a level below the author-reader level). This level comprises of an implied author (a text's projection of an overarching intra-textual authority above the narrator) and an implied reader (a text's overall projection of a reader role super ordinate to any narratee) Chatman (1978); Lanser (1981). The main reason for implementing this level is to account for unreliable narration. Booth (1961) and Chatman (1990) discusses this concept based on their own assumptions

The implied author is a textual construct that represents the society's ideals, values and norms that can be inferred from the literary strategies adopted in a given narrative text (Fowler 1977); Rimmon- Kenan (2002).

It should be noted that although specific participants in the communication process can be delineated in a narrative text, these participants perform communicative acts simultaneously at different but related levels. Indeed, it is this distinction between the levels of action, fictional mediation, and non-fictional communication that the model establishes useful points of reference for key terms like author, reader, narrator, and narratee/ addressee (Coste, 1989).

Essentially, various communication levels co-occur. While the characters interact within the fictional world, the narrator and the narratee as well as the author and the real reader are also communicating at their respective levels. This is where narration becomes both a communicative process as well as a communicative act. Consequently, a narrative text does much more than revealing a literary structure. A narrative text is a mode of cultural self-expression (Bal, 1999: ix). Narrative texts such as novels are written purposely to communicate something to the implied reader (Herman et al, 2010:137; Currie, 2010). Arguably, in a narrative text, the implied author communicates something to the implied reader(s). What is communicated may be an ideology/ideologies, values, beliefs and norms of a given cultural milieu.

Still now, the previous discussion attempted to give brief explanations about narrative theory, in general, and about fictional narrative communication. The following is the theories and assumptions by different scholars of the area on the targeted narrative strategies for this specific study.

### **3.3 Narrative Instance**

The narrative instance is defined as the intersection of three key elements: narrative voice (who is speaking?), time of narration (when does the telling occur relative to the story?), and narrative perspective (through whom are we perceiving?) (Genette, 1980: 217). However, as the last two elements are not the focus of this study, they are not explored in detail.

#### **3.3.1 Narrative Voice**

Sometimes the terms “narrative voice” and “voice” are used interchangeably (Genette, 1980; Jahn 2005). However, the term narrative voice is preferred in this study because it clearly brings out the idea that it is the voice of the narrator and not any other voice that does the speaking in a narrative text. The form that a narrative voice takes in a narrative text has a great impact on the way the reader perceives the narrated story. Narrative voice refers to the textual person who speaks in the text as Jahn (2005: N.3.1) defines it as “a characteristic vocal or tonal quality projected through a text”.

Narrative voice for Genette (1980:186) is the speaker or “voice” of the narrative discourse. This is the entity that establishes communicative contact with an addressee (the narratee). This agent decides what is to be told, how it is to be told, especially from what point of view, and in what sequence. Thus, it directly refers to the narrator of the story. Bal (1985:19) noted that “the narrator is the most central concept in the analysis of narrative text”.

Different scholars give their own views about the narrator of a certain text. Although their views of approaching the concept are different, they all characterize a narrator as the speaker or voice of the narrative discourse. Scholars set criteria to distinguish the types of narrators in their discussion. In her discussion, Rimmon-Kenan (2002:97) argues that distinguishing types of narrators depends on the criteria which are crucial factors in the readers understanding attitude to the story. These criteria are: the narrative level to which the narrator belongs; the extent of his/her participation in the story; the degree of perceptibility of his/her role; and his/her reliability. All these criteria provide a sound and unified basis for analysis of narrative voice. Under this discussion, the researcher will also make use of different principles suggested by

Booth (1961), Chatman (1978), Genette (1980) and Stanzel (1984) to identify types of narrators in a narrative fiction.

### **3.3.1.1 Narrator's Relation to the Story**

Based on the involvement of the narrator in the story, two things are basically understood: narrators either actively participating in the story or observing the characters far from the story. Regarding this, Genette (1980:224-245) classified narrators as:

“We will distinguish two types of narrative: one with the narrator absent from the story s/he tells..., the other with the narrator present as a character in the story s/he tells....I call the first type heterodiegetic and the second type homodiegetic.”

The prefix “homo” points to the fact that the individual who acts as a narrator is also a character on the level of action; whereas the prefix “hetero” connotes to the different nature of narrator's world as compared to the world of action; and “diegetic” means 'pertaining to narrating'.

Thus, homo-diegetic narrator is the one who participates in the story s/he is narrating. In other words, the narrator is also a character. This type of narrator presents what s/he did, what s/he saw, what happened to her/him and any other things that s/he experienced mostly by using first person pronouns. Hetero-diegetic narrator, on the other hand, is a narrator who prefers to stay away from the story world and who reports what is going on in the lives of the characters. Here, the narrator hides him/herself by the characters. Genette (1980) also suggests a third category of narrator known as autodiegetic narrator, i.e. a narrator who is a protagonist in a story s/he narrates.

Rimmon-Kenan (2002:98) strengthens Genette's idea by saying “both extradiegetic and intradiegetic narrators can be either absent from or present in the story they narrate.” She evidently argued that narrators absent from the story and their higher narratorial authority in relation to the story are given the superiority or feature of “omniscience”. According to her, this “omniscience” suggests narrator's relevant familiarity with the characters' inner most thoughts and feelings; knowledge of past, present and future; presence in locations where characters are supposed to be unaccompanied (e.g. on a lonely stroll or during a love-scene in a locked room); and knowledge of what happens in several places at the same time.

Stanzel (1984) in his “Narrative Situation” also classifies narrators as first person, figural and authorial narrative situations. First person and authorial situations roughly correspond with Genette’s terms of homodiegetic/heterodiegetic narrators. A first-person narrative is told by a narrator who is present as a character in his/her story; it is a story of events s/he has experienced him-or herself, a story of personal experience. To make clear with the narrator’s extent of participation in a narrative, Stanzel (1971: 60-61) argues that the first person narrative situation would completely be bound to the fictional realm of the story, with the mediator/ narrator being part of the fictional realm. Thus, the first person narrator is a character with in the story, which is limited by the same boundaries as the other characters. There is no difference between the world of the narrator and that of the characters. But what the first person distinguishes himself from the novel’s other characters is by her/his desire for expression and presentation.

Concerning first-person narrator, Stanzel (1971) also states the distinction between the experiencing-self and the narrating-self depends on their extent of participation in the fictional world because they are clearly separated from each other by a more or less clearly marked time span. The individual who acts as a narrator (narrating I) is also a character (experiencing I) on the level of action.

An authorial narrative, on the other hand, is told by a narrator who is absent from the story, i.e., does not appear as a character in the story; s/he tells a story involving other people. It is characterized by the fact that the narrator or mediator is not a part of the fictional realm of the novel. An authorial narrator sees the story from an outsider's position, often a position of absolute authority that allows her/him to know everything about the story's world and its characters, including their conscious thoughts and unconscious motive. The narrator’s reality basically exists in a different realm than in the world in which the story takes place. Besides, the process of transmission originates from an external perspective. The authorial narrator usually intrudes up on the story and provides even judgments and commentary on the events (ibid: 24, 39, and 47).

The third type of narrator found in figural narrative situation, is different from the types of narrators discussed above. A figural narrative presents a story as if seeing it through the eyes of a character. This situation does not feature a mediator, but instead there is what Stanzel (1971:25)

calls a reflector, "... a figure of the story through whose eyes the reader seems to view the fictional world." Here the narrator is also a character with in the story, but s/he does not address the reader directly like an authorial and first person narrators do. The reader perceives the unfolding events through the eyes of the reflector, and the narrative voice remains backgrounded. In contrary to authorial and first person narrators, figural medium conveys sense of mediacy to the readers, without the help of an obvious mediator. Hence, since the above discussions are their own views, the study will use both scholars' terminologies.

### **3.3.1.2 Narrator's Degree of Perceptibility**

Voice can only enter into a text through a reader's perception, unless the text is basically an oral narrative, or is performed in the context of a public reading. Sensitivity of voice is mostly a task of reader's interpretative abilities of the speaker in a story. Perceptibility ranges from maximum overtness to the maximum covertness because these signals are voice markers in a text. As it is discussed above, a narrator can be external or internal to the story s/he narrates. Similar to this, a narrator can tell the story in different degrees of perceptibility which indicates narrator's overtness or covertness in a novel.

The audibility of a narrative voice is best understood as being a matter of degrees. Degree of overtness or covertness is identified by the functions that a narrator performs. The narrator's discourse can refer in differing degrees of the act of narrating or to the level of action. Narratorial discourse ranges from covert to overt mediation and fulfills a wide range of functions: a) presentation of the facts about events and extents (the obligatory technical function), b) explanatory and evaluative comments on the characters and events, c) generalizations, d) self-reflexive utterances such as commentary on the discourse (meta-narrative functions), and f) reader addresses (phatic and appellative functions). Therefore, narratorial discourse functions of a narrator are commentary on the story, reader addresses, narratorial self-characterization, generalizations which have no direct reference to the story world, and meta-narrative comments on the discourse. These are criteria that help readers to distinguish an overt narrator from the sort of covert narrator that can encounter just like in figural narrative situation.

Chatman (1978: 222) argues that to label narrators as covert or overt is to imply that a certain

feature marks a boundary between two kinds of narrators. Since the functions performed by any given narrator are necessarily markers of identification, it is logical to study them. Because, that the narrator's degree of 'perceptibility' is directly linked to the functions s/he fulfills in a narrative act, then the criterion of overt/covert may guide the reader to find the identity of a particular narrator and eventually determine the origin of utterances, opinions, judgments, thoughts and attitudes which are all important parameters when making distinctions or describing narrative voice of a text.

Narrators generally fall into one of two categories: overt or covert which are important signs to perceive her/him in a narrative fictional discourse. These distinctions can be easily seen in different types of discourse. Jahn (2005) distinguishes overt and covert narrators depending on how the presence of a narrator is signaled in the text. According to him, a narrator can be identified as an overt if s/he refers her/himself in the first person (i.e., I, we, etc.); if s/he directly or indirectly addresses the narratee and offers reader-friendly exposition whenever it is needed (using the 'conative' or 'appellative' discourse function); and if s/he exhibits a 'discoursal stance' or 'slant' toward characters and events, especially in his/her use of rhetorical figures, imagery, evaluative phrases and emotive or subjective expressions ('expressive function'). Besides, an overt narrator is one who 'intrudes' into the story in order to pass philosophical or metanarrative comments with a distinctive voice.

On the contrary, a narrator is covert if s/he displays none of the features of overtness. Therefore, a narrator is covert if s/he neither refers to her/himself nor addresses any narratees; if s/he has a more or less neutral (non-distinctive) voice and style; and if s/he is sexually indeterminate and shows no 'conative solicitude' at all. Plus, a covert narrator does not provide description even when it is urgently needed and never intrudes or interferes rather lets the story tell it self, i.e., reveals events in a story in their natural sequence and tempo (ibid: 46).

In addition to the above explanations, Chatman also depicts that the narrator can make her- or himself more or less visible. S/he identifies certain narrator-indicators in the text which are also important determinants in the movement from invisible to visible narrators (Chatman, 1978: 219-249): (a) description of setting, (b) identification of characters, (c) temporal summary, (d) definition of characters, (e) reports of what characters did not think or say, and (f) commentary.

The ordering of these six indicators marks an increase, not only in perceptibility, but also in the narrator's involvement in the story. Description of setting indicates the minimal degree of a narrator's presence in the text. On the other side, identification of characters refers to the contribution of the narrator to give the reader the plain knowledge required to begin or continue the narrative action by providing and identifying the character to the reader. A temporal summary, however, shows more perceivable narrator involvement. As Chatman (1978:223) says, "Summary presupposes a desire to account for time-passage, to satisfy questions in a narratee's mind about what has happened in the interval. An account cannot but draw attention to the one who felt obliged to make such an account".

Similarly, definition of character depends upon identification of characters, implying an abstraction, generalization or summing up on the part of the narrator as well as a desire to present such labeling as authoritative characterization. Reports of what the characters did not think or say begins to truly mark the narrator's autonomy as distinct from simply relating a story. The narrator, by reporting to the reader what the characters are either unaware of or are trying to hide, begins to be perceived as a source of information separate from the subject matter of characters of the fiction. Finally, the narrator may comment upon the story or narration itself, possibly offering an interpretation of the story. Such interpretation is reflexive in that it often reveals as much information about and insight into the interpreter as it does into that which is being interpreted. Commentary includes interpretations, judgments, and generalizations of a narrator on events, characters, etc.

Moreover, Chatman (1978) reminds "in covert narration we hear a voice speaking of events, characters, and setting, but its owner remains hidden in the discursive shadows". In using the free indirect form, the illusion of a direct version of thoughts can be retained to a large extent and in this way accomplish the effect of a covert narrator. This is accomplished by the use of word order, interruptions, hesitation, emphasis, the forming of verbs, style characteristics and writing conventions. In addition, the illusion that a character is speaking can be created by expressive utterances. Examples include exclamations, questions, expletives, commands, repetitions, interruptions, the words "yes" and "no", colloquial language expressions and forms of expression non-typical of narration (for instance terms of endearment, technical jargon and foreign language elements). If these expressions can be attributed to the narrator, the covertness

is thus terminated. The narrator in covert narratives ought to be prepared for use of language in order to avoid his or her becoming visible or observable. By placing limitations on the narrator (for instance space or time wise) the illusion of invisibility can be sustained. Greater freedom creates a stronger awareness of the presence of the narrator, (Chatman, 1978: 197-212).

### **3.3.1.3 Reliability of Narrators**

In addition to the above categories, narrator's reliability is another aspect in identifying the type of narrator and analyzing a text's narrative voice. Thus, a narrator can be reliable or unreliable in presenting the story. A reader is expected to determine whether the voice of a fictional text is reliable or unreliable depending on convincing and realistic qualities of textual evidences. Readers maintain different levels of trust on a text they read regarding the truthfulness of its voice. The term unreliable narrator was coined by Wayne Booth (1961:158). He differentiates the reliable and unreliable narrator as follows:

I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not [...] what makes a narrator unreliable is that his values diverge strikingly from that of the implied author's; that is, the rest of the narrative—the norm of the work—conflicts with the narrator's presentation, and we become suspicious of his sincerity or competence to tell the "true version".

Since Booth's (1961) introduction of the concept, it has become a prominent concept by later narratologists. Rimmon-Kenan (2002: 101) defines a reliable narrator as "one whose rendering of the story and commentary on it the reader is supposed to take as an authoritative account of the fictional truth". On the other hand, an unreliable narrator is "one whose rendering of the story and/or commentary on it the reader has reasons to suspect". A narrator may be unreliable due to three basic sources of unreliability: limited knowledge, personal involvement within the story, and a problematic value scheme or even willful omission of information. An unreliable narrator may or may not be conscious of the extent of his/her ability to relate a story. She suggests that the aforementioned sources or signs of unreliability can negatively be defined by their absence to specify the reliable narrator. Therefore, specifying the reliability of the narrator is left for the

reader to determine through the course of the story.

Theoretically, scholars agree that unreliability is connected with a first person (homodiegetic) narrators (Booth, 1983; Chatman, 1978:157; Fludernik, 2009:162). Nonetheless, there have been incessant debates and incongruities among narratologists on whether it should be connected with first person or third person narrator, and on what textual and/or contextual basis unreliability of a narrator should be decided. It is true that unreliability is widely associated with first person (homodiegetic) narrator; third person narrator (heterodiegetic) is not, however, totally divorced from this conception. As Fludernik (2009:162), for instance, asserts “there is disagreement among researchers as to whether there is such a thing as unreliable [...] third person (heterodiegetic) narrator.

Unreliability can also be treated in relation to narration, in the sense of defining the term as: “the telling of a story by a narrator either homodiegetic or heterodiegetic, who may address a narratee” (Fludernik, 2009:157), than that of the condition of a homodiegetic narrator where his values diverge strikingly from that of the implied author’s (Chatman, 1978:149). In line with this, as Shen (2002: 229) writes, we say narration is unreliable precisely because we have come to the conclusion that things are not as the narrator represents them. As he further contemplates, in the case of unreliable narration, we believe that the author knows the story facts, facts that could be or could have been revealed by a reliable narrator.

Regarding this, Keen (2003:43) asks questions such as “what would change interpretively if the narrator were discovered to be withholding information, misrepresenting events, or slanting the story in a way to make it suspect?” When attempting to define a narrative voice’s reliability or unreliability, one always has to consider whether describing the narrator unreliable would affect the interpretation or meaning of the work. Chatman (1978:212) suggests when a narrator is unreliable there is a conflict between the narrator’s presentation and the rest of the narrative which makes us suspect his sincerity.

We read between the lines and come to the conclusion that the narrator is either withholding the true version of the story or is lacking the ability to tell it. Especially, an omniscient narrator can hide information from telling it to the audience. For this reason, Chatman (1978:212) states

Knowing All, of course, need not mean Telling All. Narrators regularly conceal information: that is a normal selective function of the discourse, and even covert narrators must know How Things Will Turn Out.

The central question when working with unreliability is the way in which the suspicion arises in the reader if the narrator is unaware of what is going on around him. The answer must be found in the text. According to Booth (1961) the answer is very direct; it must be the work of the implied author. He claims that this device (implied author) will always be present in the scenic or panoramic presentation, either through the unreliability in the narration or as an underlying ideology. For him, unreliability arises whenever there is a distance “between the fallible or unreliable narrator and the implied author who carries the reader with him in judging the narrator. If he is discovered to be untrustworthy, then the total effect of the work he relays to us is transformed,” (ibid: 158).

Similarly, Keen (2003) explains when an unreliable narrator is at work in a story, the effect can be irritating, amusing, shocking, or provocative of sympathy for seemingly antipathetic characters. The umbrella term under which rhetoricians would place most of the consequences of unreliability is irony, and the differences between the views of the narrator and the views that readers impute to the implied author must be significant enough to generate tension. If the identification of an unreliable narrator makes no difference to the interpretation of the story, then the term should not be used. Finally, like other aspects of narrative situation, the narrator may progress from a condition of unreliability to something closer to reliability, or a narrator could devolve into unreliability through the onset of madness or decay of faculties.

It can also be seen that unreliable narration can be noticed in the ironic distance between two of the levels of Chatman's (1978:151) communication model. He defines a “communication model” which explores the three pairs of communicating entities in a text: the narrator and the narratee (the explicit narrative discourse), the implied author and the implied reader (the implicit narrative discourse), and the real author and the real reader (the extra-textual narrative discourse). If there is no difference between the explicit and implicit narrative levels, the narration will be reliable. When there is a discrepancy between these two levels of communication, textual signs need to be analyzed to discover if the narration is unreliable.

### **3.3.2 The Time of the Narration**

The narrator is always in a specific temporal position relative to the story he/she is telling. Genette (1980) describes four kinds of narration. The first is subsequent narration, which is considered as the most common temporal position relative to the story. Here, the narrator tells the events happened in some past time. The second type is named as prior narration in which the narrator tells what is going to happen at some time in the future. This kind of narration often takes the form of a dream or prophecy. In simultaneous narration, the narrator tells his/her story at the very moment it occurs. The last type of narration is interpolated narration. This is the complex type of narration which combines subsequent and simultaneous narrations. For example, a narrator tells what he experienced during the day (after the fact), and also includes his current impressions about these events.

### **3.3.3 Focalization**

A distinction should be made between narrative voice and narrative perspective; the latter is the point of view adopted by the narrator, which Genette calls focalization. Adopting the term focalization, Genette sets out to explore the "different points of view from which the action is looked at" (1980: 161). Further definitional questions include "Who sees?", "Who perceives?", and "Who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?" (1980: 186).

These are matters of perception: the one who perceives is not necessarily the one who tells, and vice versa. Genette (1980) distinguishes three kinds of focalization as Zero focalization, Internal focalization and External focalization. Zero focalization is happened when the narrator knows more than the characters. S/he may know the facts about all of the protagonists, as well as their thoughts and gestures. This is the traditional "omniscient narrator". If the narrator knows as much as the focal character, he calls it internal focalization. This character filters the information provided to the reader. He cannot report the thoughts of other characters. The third is an external focalization in which the narrator knows less than the characters. S/he acts a bit like a camera lens, following the protagonists' actions and gestures from the outside; he is unable to guess their thoughts

Depending on Genette's discussion on the concept, later scholars also explain the concept based on their own assumptions. According to Rimmon-Kenan (2002), Mike Bal (1985), and Chatman (1986) notion, focalization can be divided into two based on the position relative to the story world as external focalization and internal focalization.

**External Focalization:** The proximity of the focalizer to the story world is the basis to identify this kind of focalization. It has got different naming as "external focalizer" (Rimmon-Kenan: (2002), Chatman (1986), "non-character bound focalizer" Bal (1985:148), etc. when we ask the question "whose perspective orients the current information in the text?", if the answer leads us to a focalizer that is not part of the story world, it is an external focalization. This is the common type of taking readers' perspectives to the story world. Most of the time, external focalizations are used in narratives by shifting frequently with internal focalization. Nevertheless, it does not mean that all narratives use only external focalization. Many authors use variety of focalization to achieve a unique effect on readers.

**Internal Focalization:** Like external focalization, internal focalization also called as Character bound focalizer by narratologist Bal (1985). As pointed out above, readers may access a text's information based on a character's perspective about events, facts, etc. going on in the story world. In such cases, readers are forced to see the story world according to the focalizer's perspective. All the information about the story world is highly influenced by the overall life orientation of this focalizer such as age, sex, social status, political orientation, economical status, etc.

**Double Focalization:** According to Bal (1985) double focalization refers to when the external focalization watches along with a person, without leaving focalization entirely to a character focalization. This happens when an object (which a character can perceive) is focalized, but nothing clearly indicates whether it is actually perceived. She also notes that an external focalizer at the first level of focalization "looks over the shoulder" of a character focalizer at a second level in an attempt to put critical comments into the reader's mouth. In other words, the narrator intrudes himself into his narrative and addresses his reader directly over the heads of his characters.

Based on the degree of persistence, Rimmon-Kenan (2002) divided focalization into three groups. These are: fixed focalization, multiple focalization, variable focalization. Jahn (2005)

and other recent narratologists add one more kind of focalization on Rimmon-Kenan's category. They call it collective focalization.

**Fixed focalization:** Focalization may change from page to page, or from chapter to chapter, etc. It may also remain constant throughout a certain narrative text. There are many written and filmic narratives present facts and events of the story world from a constant perspective a focalizer. This kind of focalization is what we call it fixed focalization. As its name indicates a certain narrative text like prose fiction has to begin and end the narration from a single focalizer's perspective. This kind of focalizer is, thus, the ultimate source of information about the story world. Readers see every progress of the narrative as the way the focalizer sees.

**Multiple focalization:** Often times, authors present a specific scene from the perspective of different focalizers in order to show reader the different perception of characters about a single event. This way of focalizing the same event differently according to the different perception of characters is called multiple focalization. All the time that specific event or scene is seen through the eyes of different focalizers, most of the time through internal focalizers. This kind of focalizer has a special effect on readers by showing how perception of the same happening seen from different angles of view evolving from human experience gained in life.

**Variable focalization:** Unlike in multiple focalization, in variable focalization multiple scene or events are focalized in different time of the narration. Like the multiple focalization, different scenes are focalized in different time of the narration. Writers utilize variable focalization for making audiences to see different scene or events of the story world through the eyes of different focalizers. What makes this kind of focalization different from multiple focalization is that there is no repetition of focalizing the same event or scene, new focalizer makes readers see new focalized scenario.

**Collective focalization:** When authors want to viewers/reader to see through the total sum of a group of people, they prefer to use collective focalization. This technique of focalization is often times used to make readers to perceive the shared attitude of many characters on a certain issue in the story world.

### 3.4 Narrative Level

Story telling can occur in different levels. As Barths (1984) puts it, there are "tales within tales within tales". There are some possibilities when a story is told within story. One such circumstance arises as Bal (1981:43) "when a character in a story begins to tell a story of her or his own, creating a narrative within a narrative, or a tale within a tale". Narrator's level of narrative has been discussed by Genette (1980), Bal (1985) and Rimmon-kennan (2002). They discussed the same type of narrators using their own terminologies. This section begins with explaining the concept of narrative levels by using different scholars terminologies. The relationship between the embedding and embedded narratives, and the function of the embedded texts are the last concepts covered in this section.

#### 3.4.1 The Nature of Narrative Levels

According to Genette (1980), a narrator can be either extradiegetic or intradiegetic based on the story level. S/he can be "outside" or "inside" of the story narrated to the reader. An extradiegetic narrator is above or superior to the story s/he narrates, whereas the intradiegetic narrator is inside the fictional world created by the story. When the narrative continues, according to him, we call it as extradiegetic→ interdiegetic→ intera- interdiegetic narrators based on the story level that a narrator narrates. Thus, the narrator is also named as an extradiegetic (the narrator who is outside of the story) and intradiegetic (a narrator who narrates the internal level of narration).

Genette (1980: 248) also makes a categorical distinction or paradigm in relation to the narrator's status of both by his/ her narrative level (extradiegetic or intradiegetic) and her/his presence in the story (i.e. heterodiegetic or homodiegetic) by saying:

We can represent the four basic types of narrator's status as ... (1) extradiegetic-heterodiegetic ..., a narrator is the first degree who tells a story that s/he is absent from; (2) extradiegetic-homodiegetic ..., a narrator in the first degree who tells his own story; (3) intradiegetic-heterodiegetic ..., a narrator in the second degree who tells stories s/he is on the whole absent from; and (4) intradiegetic-homodiegetic ..., a narrator in the second degree who tells his own story.

As a result of this, one can argue that extradiegetic and intradiegetic narrators can also be both heterodiegetic and homodiegetic at the same time. The type of narrator in relation to the story enables the reader to determine whether the narrator is outside of the chain of events of the story, or a character who is in the story s/he tells it.

Bal (1985) is another scholar who has a different terminology in her discussion of narrative levels. Unlike Genette, she prefers the term ‘hypo’ for narratives which come under intradiegetic. For her, the original narrative becomes a 'frame' or 'matrix' narrative, and the story told by the narrating character becomes an 'embedded' or 'hypo' narrative. Thus, the level of narrative becomes intra-diegetic → hypodiegetic → hypo-hypodiegetic narratives.

In addition, Rimmon-Kenan (2002) suggests her own terminology in discussing on embedded narratives. She prefers to count the number of narratives, as first, second, third, etc. narratives according to their presence of the embedded stories. For her, a first-degree narrative is a narrative that is not embedded in any other narrative, whereas a second-degree narrative is a narrative that is embedded in a first-degree narrative, and a third-degree narrative is one that is embedded in a second-degree narrative, etc. Correspondingly, a first-degree narrator is the narrator of a first-degree narrative; a second-degree narrator is the narrator of a second-degree narrative, etc. Regarding to the naming of multiple embedded narratives, the present study adopts Rimmon-Kenan's terminology to avoid redundancy. In novels like *Americanah*, a novel which contain more than three embedded narratives, repeatedly stating the narrative and narrator of each story becomes awkward. Having this in mind, the relationship between observed between narratives in different levels of narration is as follows.

### **3.4.2 Relationship between Narrative Levels**

Genette (1980:232-233) differentiates the main types of relationships of narrative levels that can connect the metadiegetic narrative to the primary narrative in which it is inserted. For him, the first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis discussing on the second narrative as an explanatory function. The second type involves of a purely thematic relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity

between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfills a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content a function of distraction, for example and/or obstruction.

Mieke Bal (1985:57) observes that when the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, we gradually forget the fabula of the primary narrative: “this apparently loose relationship between primary and embedded text is relevant to the development of the primary fabula”. Another possible relationship between the two texts presents itself when the two fabulas are related to each other. This structure has two possible meanings; either the embedded story explains the primary story, or it resembles the primary story. In the first case the relationship is made explicit by the narrator narrating the embedded story; in the second the explanation is usually left to the reader, or merely hinted at, in the fabula. Genette (1980:232) refers to this relationship as one of “direct causality”. He further explains that these kinds of embedded narratives seek to answer the question “what events led to the present situation?”

In fact, in the narratives which contain multiple layers of narration, authors strategically insert the embedded narrative for a certain effect. The following is the functions of embedded narratives in multi layered stories.

### **3.4.3 Functions of the Embedded Narratives**

It is the authors’ choice to employ multi layered narrative techniques in their works for various reasons. The common uses include: for aesthetic purpose as a means of adding diversity to the narrative act, dramatic impact, sharpening characterization, developing thematic concerns and increasing the complexity of the narrative. This particular study focuses on the roles of the embedded narratives in the novels under study.

Narratologists like Genette (1980) and Bal (1985) have forwarded possible functions of embedded narratives. Rimmon-Kenan (2002:95), based on the works of these narratologists, argues three types of embedded narrative functions, in which these functions sometimes present separately, or sometimes in combination. These are actional, explicative and thematic functions

of embedded narratives. Actional function is noticed where the telling itself progresses the plot, and explicative function is when the embedded narrative explains the diegesis. Thematic function is found when the embedded narrative functions as *Mise en abyme* in French, stories that reflect in some way the narrative around them. This study begins with the analysis of these Rimmon-Kennan's functions of embedded narrative and then expands to other functions revealed in the novel-Americanah.

### **The Explicative (Explanatory) Function**

Readers may face with ambiguities on the primary narrative if they could not get full background information on the reasons or motives which led to the emergence of the existing story. Embedded narratives serve as an answer to this type of questions that arise in the primary narrative. This function helps readers to understand how the events in the primary narrative came to be. All these narratives, explicitly or not, according to Genette (1980:232), answer a question of the type "what events have led to the present situation?"

### **Actional Function**

When the very telling of the embedded narrative progresses the plot, it is considered that the embedded narrative occurs as actional function. This function bases from Genette's (1980:233) third type of function where such an embedded narrative: "involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfills a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content- a function of distraction, for example and/ or of obstruction".

### **Thematic Function**

Rimon-Kenan (2002:92) defines the thematic function of the embedded narrative as "one that establishes a relationship of analogy, that is, similarity and contrast between the narrative levels" (92). Genette (1980:233) also states that purely thematic relationship "implies no spatiotemporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis; a relationship of contrast or of analogy". Based on these two definitions of the thematic function of embedded narratives, it is not easy to get such kind of embedded narratives nested for this specific purpose. It is because they exist as a form of

continuity in space and time in the events related in the embedded narratives and the embedding ones.

In the preceding section, an attempt has been made to discuss the theoretical concepts of the second selected narrative strategy, i.e., narrative level, as it pertains to this study. The discussion now turns to the third and final narrative strategy: narrative time.

### **3.5 Narrative Time**

In the real world, there is nothing out of time. It is part of human's experience as Rimmon-Kenan (2002:84) says "[t]ime is one of the most basic categories of human experience." Like in our daily life, stories are bounded by their own time in texts. Thus, time is one of the crucial concepts of narrative, which literally refers to the account of events occurring over time.

The authority of the theory of narrative time is Genette (1980). Except few terminologies, the other narratologists suggest their assumptions based on Genette's theory of narrative time; they give further explanations on the previously formulated theories of this specific area. Accordingly, since there is no a significant difference among the above scholars on narrative time, the study will be framed by Genette's (1980) theory of narrative time as a framework, and will use later narratologists' discussions for further explanation.

Basically, literary time analysis is concerned with three questions: when? How long? and How often? Skillful use of these techniques allows the narratee to identify which narrative elements are being emphasized by the author(s) and what the structure and organization of the text is. The following is the explanation of these facets of narrative time.

#### **3.5.1 Order (When)**

Order refers to the handling of the chronology of the story. Unlike in actual life, the order of happenings is not fixed in fictional stories. It is the author's authority to fix the order of events either chronologically or not. Genette (1980) defines order as the temporal sequence of events in the story and the pseudo temporal sequence of their arrangement in the narrative discourse. In addition, Toolan (1988:49) also defines it as "the relationship between the assumed sequence of events in the story and their actual presentation in the text." Similarly, Hawthorn (2004) explains that it refers to both the temporal pattern of events in the story and their placing in the linear succession of events in the text. In short, it examines the chronological relationships of events both in the story and in the discourse.

Our emphasis here is whether the presentation of the story follows the natural sequence of events-chronologically. Stories can be narrated chronologically or out of their chronological sequence. If the narrator jumps back to forth and vice versa in presenting events, as Jahn

(2005:75) presents as “a deviation from strict chronology in a story” we call it anachrony. The two main types of anachrony are flashbacks and flash forwards what Genette (1980) calls them as “analepsis and prolepsis”, and further discussed as “retrospection and anticipation” by Bal (2009). Genette (1980) uses this terminology to avoid the vagueness, psychological and cinematic-visual connotation of flashback and forth forward, respectively. This study uses Genette’s terms analepsis and prolepsis to avoid the vagueness flashback and forth forward.

As Richardson (2002) states, analepsis and prolepsis are often important to construct 'themes' in a story. He suggests that writers make strategic use of both analepsis and prolepsis in telling a story. In this regard, he says that the best place of beginning a story is in the middle of the story (*in medias res of the story*), with analeptic material sketching out what passed before, and proleptic devices hinting at what event will occur, and thereby engaging the reader and generating narrative momentum.

**Analepsis:** Analepsis is one of the categories of anachrony that interrupts the sequence of the story in the discourse. It is the presentation of events that have occurred before the current story. According to Genette (1980) and Rimmon-Kenan (2002), it is a way of revealing events which occurred in the past with respect to the first narrative. In other words, Toolan (1988) defines it as a chronological movement back in time or goes back to the earlier events of the story. As Rimmon-Kenan (2002) states, it renders information either about the character, event, or story line mentioned at that point in the discourse. In this regard, the function of analepsis is to make clear up secrets or to make the reader aware of some important events to understand the story. Furthermore, Genette (1980) classifies analepsis into external analepsis, internal analepsis and mixed analepsis, depending on whether the point to which they reach is located outside or inside the temporal field of main story line (the first narrative).

External analepsis occurs outside of the main narrative of the discourse and ends before the beginning of the main narrative. In line with this, Chatman (1978) and Genette (1980) explain that it is a presentation of prior events outside the space of time covered by the main narrative. In this sense, its entire extent is remains external to the extent of the main narrative. It prepares the readers about the conclusion of the text by recounting an episode outside the primary story. As Genette (1980) and Bal (2009) point out, it fills out the first narrative by enlightening the reader

on one or another “antecedents’without interrupting the first narrative of the discourse; and also helps to interpret the past events.

Unlike external analepsis, internal analepsis happens within the main narrative of the story. As different scholars define, it is a presentation of the past events within a space of time covered by the main narrative. Concerning this, Genette (1980), Grabe (2001) and Rimmon-Kenan (2002) state that internal analepsis refers to earlier events that happens after the beginning of the main narrative and ends before the main narrative. Genette (1980) and Grabe (2001) note that internal analepsis is more problematic; it can affect the movement of events in the primary narrative because it occurs within its ambit. Therefore, it interferes with primary narrative by means of collision or redundancy.

Furthermore, Genette (1980) classifies it into internal heterodiegetic analepsis and internal homodiegetic analepsis with respect to the information which recounted in the first narrative of the discourse. The content of internal heterodiegetic analepsis is different from the subject matter of the primary narrative discourse. However, internal heterodiegetic analepsis coincides temporally with the primary narrative; it is not part of the primary narrative of the text. It does not normally interfere with the story line of the primary (first narrative), as its usual function is to shed light on the past of a character or event that has been introduced recently in the narrative of the discourse. It provides background information to the reader (Genette,1980 and Grabe, 2001)

Unlike internal heterodiegetic analepsis, internal homodiegetic analepsis interrupts the primary narrative. According to Genette (1980) and Grabe (2001), it refers the same events or characters occurred in the main narrative. They distinguish it into completing and repeating analepsis. Completing homodiegetic analepsis fills the gaps in the time scheme by inserting retrospective passages in the primary narrative of the text. In this type of narrative, certain events are left out and remembered later to fill those missing gaps in time. The second type of internal homodiegetic analepsis is a repeating analepsis. Repeating homodiegetic analepsis of narrative is called recall because of its reoccurrence in the same path of the narrative text. This means that it occurs explicitly in its own track in the narrative text. Although it appears rarely in the narrative text, it has a significant role in the narrative of the text.

As explained above, repeated analepsis can be used to fill in details, fleshing out the context in layers, and helps the readers to give emphasis the repeated events. Therefore, in repeated analepsis, the same temporal moment may be returned to in many times in the narrative discourse.

Accordingly, internal analepsis concerns earlier events or episodes, which occur within the main narrative as analepsis; sometimes it is difficult to distinguish it from the main narrative. Hence, it may be difficult to understand the temporal order of the discourse. Mixed analepsis is the combination of both external analepsis and internal analepsis. It shows the narrator's rapid movement of his/her narration from past narrative to present narrative and vice versa. As Genette (1980) and Grabe (2001) point out, mixed analepsis entails outside the space of time of the primary story and ends either within it or out of it. Thus, it begins before the starting point of the primary narrative, and at a later stage, either joins with the primary narrative or goes beyond the starting point of the primary narrative. In this case, external analepsis and internal analepsis are intermingled in the narrative passage.

**Prolepsis:** The chronological deviation appears in the narrative text by anticipating or projecting something that will occur after the main story ends is called prolepses. Many narratologists describe prolepses as any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later. Toolan (1988) and Rimmon-Kenan (2002) state that prolepses refer to an anachronological movement fore-ward in the time of stories. In his definition, Toolan (1988) underlines that prolepsis always refers to the presentation of future events before their time or before their actual sequence. In other words, it is a future tense narrative which recounts events that have not yet occurred. Like analepses, prolepses are also divided into three major categories. These are external prolepses, internal prolepses, and mixed prolepses.

External prolepsis is the interruption of the first narrative to narrate an event that would take place after the end of the first narrative. According to Genette (1980), this kind of prolepsis is quite beyond the scope of the first narrative which mostly occurs in the form of an epilogue, digressions, and allusions.

It is found in the opposite position in the narration from external analepsis. It is because, even though, both interrupts the first narrative, the earlier one ahead in time and the later back in time from the first narrative.

Internal prolepsis is the reverse parallel for internal analepses. The former one refers to events that interrupt the first narrative in order to narrate later events that would happen before the closing of the first narrative. Genette (1980) states that depending on whether the internal prolepsis involves a change of focus to a different character, event or story line; they are classified as homo- or heterodiegetic prolepsis. Homodiegetic prolepsis carries information about the same character, event or storyline as that has been presented in the immediately preceding text, whereas heterodiegetic prolepsis carries information about different character, event or story line from what has been presented in the coming story. This does not mean that it has nothing to do with the story on the current narration. It has explanatory function in building the story.

**Mixed Prolepses:** Chatman (1974) states that mixed prolepses begin before the end of the story-now and end after the end of the story-now. In this case, the first narrative may be interrupted to narrate events that will happen later. This combines events that would happen before the closing of the primary narrative and go beyond the closing of the primary narrative.

### **3.5.2 Duration (How long)**

The distinction between 'story' and 'plot' is fundamental to narratology, but there are many competing groups, each tending to prefer its own terminology; hence, we find the same distinction made with different terms. For instance, as cited in Barry (2002), David Lodge (1980) in his well-known essay prefers the Russian Formalist terms *fabula*, instead of 'story', and *sjuzhet* (pronounced 'soojay') for 'plot'. Most current narratologists use 'story', but instead of 'plot' they often prefer to use the term 'discourse'. This, I think, is sensible, because it isn't just 'plot' in the narrow sense which is at issue, but style, viewpoint, pace, and so on, which is to say, the whole 'packaging' of the narrative which creates the overall effect. Gerard Genette (1980:231-40) uses yet another set of equivalent terms, these being *his-toire*, which has the same meaning as 'story'

or fabula', and recit, which means the same as 'plot' or sjuzhet.

No narrative retells totally everything that presumably happened in a story; those events considered most important will normally be told in some detail, others will be left out or summarized. This inconsistency between the events of the story and the events as rendered by the narrative's discourse is the focus of attention when one considers the aspect of duration.

For Genette (1980), duration, in the narrative, refers to the relationship between the time coverage of events in the story and their pseudo-duration in the telling in the text. Thus, the notion of duration is understood as the time taken up by an episode and the time taken to read the text. Howthorn (2005:188) also defines duration as “a relationship between the time covered by the story or part of it (such as an event) and the time allotted to it by the text (story time and text time)”. Therefore, it is of vital importance to make a distinction between story time and discourse time.

*Story-time* is the sequence of events and the length of time that passes in the story. It is a fictional time covered by an action episode, or by the whole action. It answers the question “how long does the action in a narrative last?” *Discourse-time*, on the other hand, covers the length of time taken up by the telling or reading of the story and the sequence of events presented in discourse. One can measure it in the number of words, or pages of a narrative text, (Genette, 1980; Rimmon-Kenan, 2002 and Jahn, 2005).

As Genette (1980) and Rimmon-Kenan (2002) point out, measuring the duration of the text is difficult because of the absence of the “norm” which indicates the exact durational relationship of the story and the discourse. However, the only truly measure available is reading time, but there is a speed difference from narrator to narrator and reader to reader. Speed of narrative refers to the relationship between a duration of the story (i.e. measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years) and a length of the text (i.e. measured in lines and in pages).

In this view, the narrator may speed up or slow down the narration with respect to the event being told. For instance, a narrator summarizes someone's life in to a page or takes thousands of

pages to narrate events that occurred in a day. In addition to this factor, some readers read more quickly than others do. Therefore, the pages do not give reliable measurement of the text duration.

According to Genette (1980), the unit of measurement in duration is speed, which is classified in terms of “acceleration” and “deceleration”. Acceleration is produced by devoting short period of time of the text to a long period of time of the story, relative to the “norm” that is established to the text. By contrast, deceleration occurs when the text devotes a long period of segments to a short period of the story, relative to the “norm”. Based on these two measurements of the narrative speed, he identifies four possible measurements used to compare the durational relationships between the story and the text. He calls these narrative movements: summary, pause, ellipsis and scene. All these influence the readers’ perception of the speed of a narrative. Notably, pauses slow things down significantly, scene and ellipsis give the impression of things happening quickly.

**Summary:** Summary or acceleration is a kind of presentation in which a text’s discourse time is shorter than its story time. It characterizes a summary or a panoramic mode of presentation. It is an effect produced by applying a short segment of the text to a long period of the story, relative to the “norm” established for the narrative text. In summary, the narrator reports events in a condensed, in a thematically focused and in an orderly account form. We use this type of mode to report routine story events (things not important to the plot), to condense story time (to make a passage of time quick, or to report events that happen regularly or over a long period), and to emphasize emotions instead of events. Thus, the durational aspect of summary is speed-up, a term to indicate an episode’s discourse time is considerably shorter than its story time, (Bonheim 1982 and Jahn 2005).

In summary, the writer is supposed to use shorter sentences in narrating the main events of the story. Supporting this, Toolan, (1988:57) states: “in summary, the speed is accelerated through a textual compression of a given story period into a relatively short statement of its main features”. Chatman (1978) also states that summary presupposes a need to account for time passage, to satisfy questions in the readers’ mind about what has happened in the interval. Therefore, in this mode of narration, the discourse is briefer than the events depicted. According to Chatman

(1978:68), language provides a variety of grammatical and lexical features for indicating summary. For the verb and verb forms, for instance, he says “some verbs are by semantic nature punctual. They denote events that happen once in a relatively brief span of time, and do not recur”.

**Scene:** scenic / isochronous presentation is a presentation of equal duration, i.e. story time and discourse time are approximately equal. This presentation happens in passages containing lots of dialogue or detailed action presentations. It uses to present real time actions in the story. Some theorists like Chatman (1978) agree that although dialogue is the purest form of scene, a detailed narration of an event should also be considered scenic. In this view, scene is characterized by the degree of narrative information and the relative effacement of the narrator. Accordingly, dialogues and detailed physical actions of relatively short duration are the usual components of scene. In addition, it is a showing mode, which uses to represent things moving in time. Thus, its durational aspect is isochrony, a term indicating the conventional equality of discourse and story time (Genette, 1980[1972]; Bonheim, 1982; Rimmon-Kenan, 2002 and Jahn, 2005).

**Pause:** pause is a way of presentation in which the discourse time elapses while story time stops, and no action actually take place. It happens mainly on description and commentary modes of narration. By description, the narrator may introduce a character or describe the setting, time and other situations of the discourse; it presents objects in space or existents of the story, things that we can see, hear or feel in some way. By comment, on the other hand, the narrator comments on characters, places, the development of the action, the circumstances of the act of narrating, etc.

Pause is the opposite of ellipsis in that story time stops though the discourse continues as Rimmon-Kenan (2002:53) states it as a presentation in which “some segment of the text corresponds to zero story duration”, (Genette, 1980); Chatman (1978); Rimmon-Kenan (2002) and Toolan (1988).

**Ellipsis:** Ellipsis refers to the omission of one or more episodes in narrative discourse. In ellipsis, there is stretch of story time, which is not presented in the discourse. According to Jahn (2005), in ellipsis, the narrator halts the story time in his/her presentation, though time continues to pass in the story. Furthermore, Rimmon-Kenan (2002:55) defines ellipsis as “the maximum speed, where zero textual space corresponds to some story duration.” Therefore, it is a leaving of some

episodes in the discourse. Grabe (2001) and Genette (1980) categorize ellipsis into explicit and implicit ellipsis, depending on the gaps of the story time displayed to the readers in the narrative discourse.

Explicit ellipsis is one of the categories of ellipsis, in which the part of the story time is left out in the presentation and it is clearly depicted in the narrative text to the readers. In this case, the indication constitutes the ellipsis as textual section, which is then not totally equal to zero, or else from elision pure and simple (zero degree of the elliptical text) plus, when the narrative starts up again, an indication of the time elapsed, like the “two years later.” In this type of ellipsis, the amount of time that elapsed is identified numerically (Genette, 1980:106-109).

In implicit ellipsis, Genette (1980) and Grabe (2001) point out that it does not clearly portray the amount of the omitted story time. When it occurs in the text, the reader has to discover on her/his own from the gaps in the text that a part of story time has been omitted in the presentation. Hence, the reader can presuppose the omitted time of the story from the chronological gap in the narrative continuity. Genette (1980) calls the most implicit form of ellipsis as hypothetical ellipsis. This type of ellipsis is more secret, and the reader is not aware of a gap up to discover it from details disclosed to him (her) in an analepsis that the narrative text contains an ellipsis. In this case, hypothetical ellipsis is impossible to localize or even sometimes impossible to place in any spot at all, but revealed after the event by an analepsis.

**Stretch:** In the narrative discourse, stretch is the opposite of summary or acceleration. As Rimmon-Kenan (2002) and Bal (2009) defines, stretch (slow-down) occurs in which the discourse time covers longer time than story time. In this type of narrative, the narrator devotes a time in a long segment of the text to a short period of the story time. According to Hawthorn (2000), using of stretch in the appropriate situation creates psychological effect on the readers by providing detailed information. Similarly, Bal (2009) suggests that in the stretch, the readers’ attention is directed towards the fact that the passage of time has slowed-down.

### 3.5.3 Frequency (How often)

Frequency is the third facet of time analysis which refers to the relation between the number of times an event appears in the story and the number of times it is narrated (mentioned) in the text. In other words, it is the frequent textual telling of a particular occurrence. A certain kind of events may be repeated in the story, or one happening of an event may be described in the narrative multiple times. Frequency, therefore, is the issue of repetition. (Genette (1980), Chatman (1978), Toolan (1988), Rimmon-Kenan (2002), Manfred Jahn (2005), Bal (2009).

Genette (1980) distinguishes four possibilities that involve four kinds of frequency relations between the story and the discourse. These possibilities are narrating “n” times what happened once, narrating once what happened “n” times, narrating once what happened once, and narrating n times what happened n times. In this point, “n” represents the numerical possibilities of repetition both in the story and in the discourse.

As stated above, frequency concerns the possible repetition of events or episodes both in the narrated events and in the narrative statements. Regarding the capacity of repetition relationship between story events and their narration in the text, Genette (1980:114) distinguishes four possibilities that involve four kinds of frequency relations between the story and the discourse. These possibilities are: narrating “n” times what happened once, narrating once what happened “n” times, narrating once what happened once, and narrating n times what happened n times. In this point, “n” represents the numerical possibilities of repetition both in the story and in the discourse. Rimmon-Kenan (2002) also clarifies this Genettes classification.

**Repetitive Narrative:** Narrating n times what happened once (nN/1S, where “N” represents narrating in the discourse and “S” represents story) is a way of recounting the same event of the story in several times in the discourse. It means that when an event occurs only once and it is presented a number of times in the discourse. A narrator, for example, could repeat the telling of a key event several times throughout a story to either highlight its importance or exhibit its significance in relation to the progression of events. The repetition of the same event in various angles is the characteristics of post-modernist novel (Genette, 1980, and Rimmon-Kenon (2002).

**Iterative narrative:** Narrating once what happened  $n$  times ( $1N/nS$ ) is a way of telling once an event that happened several times in the story. This type of frequency happens where a single narrative utterance takes upon itself several utterances together of the same event. According to Genette (1980, iterative narration provides a sort of necessary preparation or background information. He discusses iterative narrative into three categories: external iterative (constant repetition), internal iterative (synthesizing iteration) and pseudo-iterative. External iterative happens within a singular scene. Genette (1980:118) calls this type of narration as generalizing iterations. In external iterative narrative, the temporal field devoted by the iterative section exceeds the temporal field of the scene. In this case, the insertion of the iterative section uses as a link with the external period. Another much classical type of move to the iterative within a singular scene is partly to treat the duration of this scene itself in an iterative form where upon the scene is then synthesized by a sort of paradigmatic classification of the events composing it. This is called internal or synthesizing iteration. Unlike external iterative narrative, the iterative insertion covers the period of the scene itself. Pseudo iterative is one of the categories of iterative frequency.

**Singulative Narrative:** In this form of narration, the singleness of the narrative statement matches to the singleness of the narrated event. It is a common way of narrating in which what happened once in the story is recounted once in the discourse. Rimmon-Kenan (2002) states that this is the most common narrative form. Basically, this section deals with the capacity of repetition of events both in the story and in the discourse. It is also important to discuss frequency with other interconnected elements of narrative i.e., focalization. This type of frequency is related to fixed focalization. According to Jahn (2005:51), fixed focalization is “the presentation of narrative facts and events from the constant point of view of a single focalizer”. One can understand from the above definition that this single focalizer recounted once what happened once from constant perspective.

There is also another type of frequency what Genette (1980:115) explains as “still in fact singulative and thus reduces to the previous type, since the repetitions of the narrative simply correspond.” It is Narrating  $n$  Times what Happened  $n$  Times ( $nN/nS$ ). This type of frequency

refers to the repetition of events in narrative discourse that corresponds to the repetition of events in the story. Therefore, the number of recounting events in the discourse is equal to the number of happening of events in the story. Hawthorn (2004:113) and Chatman (1978:78) calls this type a “multiple frequency” and “multiple-singularly”, respectively. As Rimmon-Kenan (2002) states, this type of frequency is a less common phenomenon.

To sum up, the research draws its theoretical orientation from narrative theory, focusing on the major narrative concepts of narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time, as previously detailed. The framework integrates the perspectives of Genette (1980) and his followers, along with subsequent revisions and contributions by later narratologists. Definitions and classifications are primarily informed by the works of Genette (1980), Stanzel (1984), Chatman (1978), Rimmon-Kenan (2002), Toolan (1988), and Jahn (2005).

The discussion of **narrative voice** in this paper is mainly based on Chatman (1978), Genette (1980) and Rimmon-Kenan (2002). However, it doesn't mean that the paper ignores the discussions and terminologies of other narratologists. Their views are used when necessary. In voice, the most important concern of critical analysis is the narrator. Under this category, the narrator types based on their involvement in the story and their perceptibility has been examined.

Regarding their participation in the story, Genette (1980) and Stanzel (1984) can be raised in forwarding their own assumptions. Genette (1980) divides narrators in to homodiegetic and heterodiegetic for first person and third person narrators respectively. The first is a narrator who is also a character in the story and the latter is the narrator who is the observer of the story. He also suggests an “auto-diegetic” narrator, i.e., the first-person narrator who tells the story of her/his life. Stanzel (1984) under his “Narrative Situation” divides narrators into first-person, authorial and figural. Stanzel's first person is similar to Genette's homo-diegetic one, but his hetero-diegetic is further divided into authorial (the narrator who is absent from the story) and figural (a narrator who presents a story as if seeing it through the eyes of a character). Hence, since their discussion is from different views, the study will use both scholars' terminologies.

The third category is based on narrator's perceptibility in the story. Here, Chatman's (1978) oppositional pairs of covert and overt narrators will be the guiding principles in this study. Overt

narrator is a narrator who seems to have a distinct personality, someone who makes her or his attitude known, etc. covert narrator, on the other hand, is the one who is hardly noticeable, who has a largely indistinct or indeterminable voice. The overtness-covertness continuum ranges from maximum overtness (almost complete presence of a narrator) to maximum covertness (almost complete absence of a narrator).

**Narrative level** has also been discussed by Genette (1980), Bal (1985) and Rimmon-kennan (2002). They discussed the same type of narrators using their own terminologies. Here, the basic concepts are whether the narrator is inside the story or not. Narrators can be “outside’ or ‘inside’ of their stories. Genette (1980) uses terms “extradiegetic” for the narrator who is outside of the story and “interadiegetic” for the narrator who narrates the internal level of narration, and Bal (1985), on the other hand, calls the original narrative as “matrix” or “frame’ which is narrated by Genette’s extra diegetic narrator. She prefers the term “hypo” for Genette’s intera diegetic narrative. The difference occurs in the case of embedded narratives. Both Genette and Bal suggest to identify the embedded narratives by repeating the first internal narrative as extra- diegetic, intera-diegetic, intera- interadiegetic narrators, and intra-diegetic, hypodiegetic, and hypo-hypodiegetic narrative, respectively. Unlike the above scholars, Remon-Kenon (2002) recommends her own terminology as first degree narrative, second degree narrative, and third degree narrative respectively. Consequently, the present paper prefers to use Rimmon-Kenon’s terminology other than Genette’s and Bal’s since it is awkward to count for narratives which have more than two embedded stories.

Basically, *narrative time* analysis is concerned with three questions: When, How long, and How often. Order refers to the handling of the chronology of the story. It is the author’s authority to fix the order of events either chronologically or not. Our emphasis here is whether the presentation of the story follows the natural sequence of events-chronologically. If the narrator jumps back to forth and vice versa in presenting events, we call it anachrony. The two main types of anachrony are flashbacks and flashforwards what Gennete (1980) calls them as “prolepsis” and “analepsis”, and further discussed as “retrospection” and “anticipation” by Bal (2009).Analepsis interrupts the sequence of the story in the discourse, whereas prolepsis anticipates or projects something that will occur after the main story ends.

For Genette (1980), duration refers to the relationship between the time coverage of events in the story and their pseudo-duration in the telling in the text. The most important thing in understanding duration is the distinction between story time and discourse time. Story-time is the sequence of events and the length of time that passes in the story. Discourse-time, on the other hand, covers the length of time taken up by the telling or reading of the story and the sequence of events presented in discourse. He identifies four possible measurements used to compare the durational relationships between the story and the text: summary, pause, ellipsis and scene. All these influence the readers' perception of the speed of a narrative. Notably, pauses slow things down significantly, scene and ellipsis give the impression of things happening quickly.

Frequency is the third facet of time analysis which refers to the relation between the number of times an event appears in the story and the number of times it is narrated (mentioned) in the text. Genette (1980) distinguishes four possibilities that involve four kinds of frequency relations between the story and the discourse. These possibilities are singulative narrative, multiple singulative narrative, iterative narrative, and repeating narrative.

The authority of the theory of narrative time is Genette (1980). Except few terminologies, most of the above narratologists suggest their assumptions based on Genette's theory of narrative time; they give further explanations on the previously formulated theories of this specific area. Accordingly, since there is no a significant difference among the above scholars on narrative time, the study will be framed by Genette's (1980) theory of narrative time as a framework, and would use later narratologists' discussions for further explanation.

Consequently, the study would basically use Genette's (1980) and Chatman's (1978) theories for analyzing narrative voice; Rimmon-Kenan's (2002) and Genette's (1980) theory of narrative levels, and Genette's (1980) theory of narrative time as a framework to analyze the targeted novels.

In the preceding discussion, an effort has been made to review the concepts of the selected narrative strategies as outlined by various narratologists. Additionally, the theoretical framework that serves as the foundation for analyzing the chosen novels has been explored. Building on these discussions, the next three chapters will focus on examining narrative voice, narrative level, and narrative time in the selected novels, respectively.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### NARRATIVE VOICE ANALYSIS

This chapter focuses on analyzing the first narrative strategy chosen for this study, namely narrative voice. As discussed in earlier chapters, narrative voice is closely tied to the narrator of the story. Drawing on Rimmon-Kenan's framework of narrator types, the chapter begins by examining the heterodiegetic narrator in Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and the homodiegetic narrator in Dinaw Mengistu's *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*. It then proceeds to explore the overt and covert characteristics of the narrators in the selected novels. The analysis is organized chronologically; starting with Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and followed by Dinaw's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* (2007).

One of the complex identities in fictional writings is the narrator's sex; it is difficult to gender the narrator grammatically as a female or male. For sexually indeterminate narrators scholars like Lanser (1981) and Bal (1985) propose methods that can help to avoid this gendering problem. Lanser (1981:166) proposed the rule to use the pronoun "appropriate to the author's sex". It is to mean that the narrator is female if the author is female, and that the narrator is male if the author is male. On the other hand, Bal (1985: 119) suggests to refer such kind of narrator as "it", however odd this may seem". She argues that since narrators are verbal constructs rather than actual people, they are not gendered and therefore should properly be termed "it" rather than "he" or "she." This study adopts Lanser's rule of using the pronoun appropriate to the author's sex for sexually indeterminate narrators, because, although they are not real, characters are revealed as humans who shares all human experiences representing real people. Thus, since the narrator is not sexually noticeable in Adichie's *Americanah*, the paper continues to pronoun the narrator as "she" which is proper to the author's sex.

Before diving into the analysis of the novels, it is helpful to first provide a plot summary of both works to facilitate a smoother understanding of the subsequent discussion.

### **Plot Summary: *Americanah* (2013)**

*Americanah* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a novel that explores themes of identity, race, love, and the immigrant experience. The story primarily follows Ifemelu, a young Nigerian woman, as she navigates life in Nigeria, the United States, and eventually back in Nigeria. Ifemelu grows up in Lagos, Nigeria, where she meets and falls in love with Obinze, a charming and intelligent young man. Nigeria, during their youth, is plagued by political instability and limited opportunities, leading Ifemelu to seek a better future in the United States.

Once in America, Ifemelu struggles to adapt to her new environment. She faces racism for the first time and realizes the complexities of identity as a Black African in the U.S., a place where she must grapple with what it means to be "Black." She begins writing a successful blog that candidly discusses race, titled "The Non-American Black," through which she analyzes her experiences and observations about race in America. However, Ifemelu's life in America is also filled with hardship, as she deals with financial struggles, depression, and a sense of alienation.

Meanwhile, Obinze, unable to join her in the U.S. due to post-9/11 immigration restrictions, moves to the UK, where he faces his own challenges as an undocumented immigrant. His life there is marked by disillusionment, menial jobs, and eventually deportation back to Nigeria.

After spending years abroad, both Ifemelu and Obinze end up back in Nigeria, where they must confront their pasts and the ways in which they've changed. Ifemelu becomes a successful writer, while Obinze has become wealthy but feels a deep sense of dissatisfaction with his life. The novel ends with the possibility of their rekindled romance as they reconnect in Nigeria, but it remains open-ended, leaving their future uncertain. Adichie uses the journeys of Ifemelu and Obinze to explore the immigrant experience, racial identity, love, and the challenges of returning home after time abroad.

**Plot Summary: *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears* (2007)**

Dinaw Mengestu's novel follows Sepha Stephanos, an Ethiopian immigrant who fled his country's revolution seventeen years earlier and now lives in Washington, D.C. He owns a small, struggling convenience store in a gentrifying neighborhood, where his isolation and sense of disconnection from his home country and the American dream weigh heavily on him.

Sepha's only real connections are with two fellow African immigrants: Joseph, from the Congo, and Kenneth, from Kenya. Together, they discuss their shared experiences of exile and displacement, often reminiscing about the countries they left behind while grappling with the disappointment of their present lives. The neighborhood around Sepha's store is undergoing rapid gentrification, and when Judith, a white professor, moves in next door with her biracial daughter Naomi, Sepha's life is stirred. He becomes close to Naomi, finding a rare sense of warmth and connection with her, and he begins to dream of a new beginning. However, racial and economic tensions soon surface as resentment grows among longtime black residents, and Sepha finds himself caught between the old community and the new.

As the novel unfolds, Sepha reflects on his past, haunted by memories of his father's death during the Ethiopian revolution and his inability to find belonging in America. The story captures his internal struggle between his desire to belong and his awareness of the insurmountable barriers that stand in his way.

## 4.1 Narrator's Relation to the Story

As clearly stated in the precedent chapter, narrators can be either homodiegetic or heterodiegetic based on their involvement in the story. In a heterodiegetic narrative, the story is told by a heterodiegetic narrator who is not present as a character in the story. The prefix hetero alludes to the “different nature” of the narrator as compared to any and all of story's characters.

### 4.1.1 Heterodiegetic Narrator in *Americanah*

This section focuses on the nature of the narrator in Adichie's *Americanah*. In most parts of the novel, the story is narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator. Except in some embedded narratives which are written by the protagonist herself, the rest of the story is narrated by a narrator who is outside the story. In addition to the heterodiegetic nature of the narrator, the narrator of the novel is also omniscient, a narrator who knows all about characters. Omniscient narrator is a narrator who is able to know the thoughts and actions of multiple characters at a time.

Understanding the thoughts of characters is a key feature of an omniscient narrator. *Americanah* skillfully employs this type of narrator in various parts of the novel to convey the characters' internal emotions as they navigate different ideological complexities they face. The omniscient narrator is noticeable from the very beginning of the novel. When Ifemelu was in a train to Trenton for her hair braiding, people were talking with each other. The narrator told us the situation reading her mind as:

If they asked what she did, she would say vaguely, “I write a lifestyle blog”. Because saying “I write an anonymous blog called *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negros) by a Non-American Blacks*” would make them uncomfortable. (4)

Here, in the above extract, the actions and the intensions of the character are clearly stated. Prior to this extract, the story states that all of the people in the train including the man who sat next to Ifemelu, the protagonist of the story, had conversations about race were “white and lean”. Thus, the narrator stated Ifemelu's thought that stating the direct title of the blog “would make them

uncomfortable” because she knew the feeling of the white Americans regarding race issues in her Thirteen years of American life experience, and she could forecast what would happen if the blogger would clearly state the title of the blog.

Instead, the narrator told us that she (the blogger) responded them that she wrote “a lifestyle blog” which is somehow a common expression. The ability of knowing what the characters think and what comes in the future is the characteristics of an omniscient narrator. It is from the omniscient narrator that readers know the hidden feeling or attitude of white Americans. The effect of using this narrative strategy, in this case, helps readers to expect that the following stories will be serious in racial issues, and to understand that the major character is sensitive on racial expressions which most of her blogs are focused on.

Similarly, when Obinze is in the marriage registration office, his feeling because of the long delay of the registrar is described as: “the seconds lengthened and curdled. *All sham marriages, all of them rang in Obinze’s head*” (231). This narrator knows how Obinze was thinking; even he could read the words in Obinze’s mind. The words foregrounded in italics are considered Obinze’s internal thoughts in which the omniscient narrator made them visible. This kind of narrator knows all the feelings of the character.

As an outsider, the narrator can also narrate different actions of characters at a time. In the following extract, for example, we can see the heterodiegetic narrator narrating the educational system of Americans, and the feeling of Ifemelu towards it. She compares Americans education system with that of Africans. Students’ participation, which allows to talk what comes to their mind even if they do not know the correct answer, has been given emphasis and become the culture in America, whereas participation is allowed if they know the correct answer in African education. The narrator describes it as:

SCHOOL IN AMERICA was easy, assignments send in by e-mail, classrooms air conditioned, professors willing to give make-up tests. But she was uncomfortable with what the professors called “participation”, and did not see why it should be part of the final grade; it merely made students talk and talk, class time wasted on

obvious words, hollow words, sometimes meaningless words. It had to be that Americans were taught, from elementary school, to always *say something* in class, no matter what (134).

As foregrounded in the excerpt, the idea is about American school system. In addition to the physical activities observed by students, she also narrates the internal feeling of the character that made Ifemelu uncomfortable with the education system she faced in which she didn't experience in her country. Thus, the narrator is omniscient in this sense that she knows all about the characters both physical actions and internal feelings. Some of the expressions were surprising for Ifemelu, and she became jarred because of the freedom they develop to use such as astonishing expressions.

Although the majority of the novel is dominantly narrated by heterodiegetic narrator, there are some incidents in which the narrators become changed. There are embedded narratives, for example, which are narrated by homodiegetic narrators in the novel. Here, the focus is not discussing about embedding, it is simply to show the narrator's shift from heterodiegetic to homodiegetic. The embedded narratives, mostly blogs, emails and letters are narrated by homodiegetic narrator. Obviously the blogs are narrated by the major character, Ifemelu, and the rest are by other characters like Obinze. There is a voice change from the first degree to the second and third degrees of narration. Thus, such kinds of narrators are intra diegetic homodiegetic narrators. Once we see the presence of heterodiegetic narrator in Americanah, the following is the discussion of homodiegetic narrator in Dinaw's novel.

#### **4.1.2 Homodiegetic Narrator in *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears***

In a homodiegetic narrative, the story is told by a (homodiegetic) narrator who is also one of story's acting characters. The prefix "homo-" points to the fact that the individual who acts as a narrator is also a character on the level of action. If the homodiegetic narrator is also the protagonist of the story, Genette (1980) calls it an autodiegetic narrator. Stephanos is the protagonist of Dinaw's novel who is also the narrator of the story. Mostly, we get information from his perspective. We get him narrating his life experiences both in Ethiopia and in the United States.

As an authodiegetic novel, the whole narrative of Dinaw's novel can be taken as the mental and physical activities of the narrating character. He, as a narrating self, reports the events and incidents in the story by remembering his experiencing self. Except some narratives by other African immigrants, majority of the novel's part is about the complicated life of the narrating character. Stephanos's life in the host land loses meaning mainly because of the memory of his father's brutal beating by the Dergue soldiers and his death with no burial ceremony. This cold fact of witnessing his father's beatings, not knowing where he was killed, not seeing his corpse and not knowing where he was buried makes Stephanos to lose interest in life.

One of the incidents to show that the character is also the narrator of the story is when Stephanos got frustrated by his first job in the USA and quitted it in less than a year to become a storekeeper:

I couldn't believe that my father had died and I had been spared in order to carry luggage in and out of a room. There was nothing special to death anymore. I had seen enough lifeless bodies by that point to know that. I thought long and hard about what it would be like to simply step off the edge. I didn't know how to swim, nor would I have tried. The next day I quit my job at the capital Hotel (142).

It is not just frustration but emptiness or the lack of meaning and purpose in his life too is at work there in USA. He was frustrated by the monotony of his menial job and the lack of interest in life engendered by his horrific experiences in the homeland. The pronouns 'I' and 'my' in the above extract shows that the narrator is also the character who narrates his own experiences.

In addition, we get Stephanos stating his attempt to escape from emptiness in his tendency to be an uninvolved watcher of life revealed in the following extract.

I want to take the couple gently by the hand and lead them down the street to Samuel's café, where we could sit under the green awning on a busy corner and watch the crowd. This, I would tell them, is all I want out of life, to sit here on this plastic lawn chairs and watch the parade of skinny and muscular men, old and young, as they flirt and fight with each other (77).

The extract shows Stephanos's obsession with watching. Both as a character and a narrator, he became an uninvolved watcher as a way of escaping the harsh reality of his life for him. A

watcher is not expected to worry about his life or anything else except silently and peacefully performing his duty of watching. His attention is focused on the other- the watched. And there is no room for facing his life's hopeless emptiness. Silently watching is his best shield against the meaninglessness and purposelessness of his life in the host land. In general, the major part of Dinaw's novel is a story told by the protagonist of the story, a narrative of his bad memory of his father's death, and his loneliness and emptiness in his host country.

There are also events when the character, representing the other two of his friends, narrates their experiences in different aspects. An example is when Kenneth and Joseph come to Stephanos's store frustrated and tired from the drudgery of their subaltern jobs. Stephanos whose store keeping business is showing him signs of a total bankruptcy is also frustrated and uninterested in life. Stephanos escapes and in the process helps his friends escape the boring and melancholic reality of their daily life by resorting to a game of African coup's and revolutions they've adopted over the years. The narrator tells us the situation as:

The two of them laugh and then quickly pour back their drinks and refill their glasses. There is a brief silence as each struggles to catch his breath. Before either of them can call me something else about America ("This country cares only about one thing..." "There are three things you need to know about Americans..."), I call out, "Bukassa." The name catches them off guard. .... They both turn and stare at me. They swirl their cups around and around to make sure it looks like they're thinking. Kenneth walks over to the map of Africa I keep taped on the wall right next to the door. (7)

As can be seen in the above extract, the narrator depicts the situation of all the three characters. Next to the extract, we see them playing a game with the map of Africa, a map with full of all old color coded countries. This game, in addition to taking their minds off the tragedy of their frustrating life momentarily, helps them maintain contact with Africa and ease the inevitable identity crises and homesickness displacement would bring upon them. Perpetual boredom and frustration thus accompany the immigrant characters in Dinaw's novel in their daily lives as a result of disillusionment, emptiness, homesickness and loss.

## 4.2 Narrators Degree of Perceptibility

The audibility of a narrative voice is best understood as being a matter of degrees. Based on their perceptibility, narrators can be overt or covert, terms coined by Chatman (1978). As its name indicates, overt narrator is a narrator who seems to have a distinct personality, someone who makes his or her attitude known, etc. covert narrator, on the other hand, is the one who is hardly noticeable, who has a largely indistinct or indeterminable voice.

The overtness or covertness of a narrator can be in relation to narrative modes. Because narrative modes can be distinguished either based on the narrator's intrusion into the story in order to tell (directly or indirectly addresses the narratee) or pass his/her comments on the actions. The overtness-covertness continuum ranges from maximum overtness (almost complete presence of a narrator) to maximum covertness (almost complete absence of a narrator). Chatman (1978:219-50) and Rimmon-kenan (2002:101) list signals of overtness in ascending order-from less to high overt as: description of settings, identification of characters, temporal summaries, definition of characters, reports of what characters did not think or say, and commentary which includes interpretation, judgment, generalization. All these markers can signify the way or the mode how the narrator overtly transfers the information. Thus, an overt narrator is a narrator who concentrates on telling mode of narration, whereas covert narrators narrate events in a showing mode.

Since a hetrodiegetic narrator is dominantly employed, Adichie's *Americanah* is mostly narrated by a covert narrator. In most parts of the novel, there is almost a complete absence of the narrator. Dialogues, the most absence of the narrator, have been observed in the novel. Mostly, the presence of the narrator has been noticed in reporting the characters' actions.

However, there are instances in which the narrator's personality becomes noticeable. In embedded narratives, for example, readers could understand that the narrator of the blogs is Ifemelu, the major character of the story. In addition, the voices forwarded by different commenters for Ifemelu's blogs have also been noticed in the novel, their names and their feelings towards her idea is explicitly narrated by the extradiegetic heterodiegetic narrator. The narrators in scenic presentation like dialogues in different parts of the novel are considered covert. Other than

narrator's voices, in such kind of narrations, character's voices are largely noticeable.

Although the story is dominantly presented by covert narrator, signals of overtness have been noticed in *Americanah*. One of the features of knowing the narrator's personality is the dialectical variations s/he made to express ideas. The narrator in Adichie's *Americanah*, for instance, is known by using Nigerian pidgins in different parts of the story. These Igbo expressions are that of the narrator's, not of character's.

She stopped on the platform to fumble in her bag for it and, at first, because Auntu Uju was incoherent, talking and sobbing at the same time, Ifemelu thought she said that Dike was dead. But what Auntu Uju was saying was o nwuchagokwa [he nearly died] Dike *anwuchagokwa*. Dike had nearly died. (365)

In the extract above, we can identify the use of Igbo lexical items, which stand between or instead of English phrases, observations, states and situations that deliver actual information. These expressions are the utterances of the narrator, in which they can help to know about the narrator's personality that she can speak Igbo language. However, the Igbo forms serve important functions as motivators, introducers and affirmers (Onukaogu, Ezechi 2010: 273). *Americanah* employs the pattern of using single phrases in Igbo, apparently to suggest and reinforce the contextual meaning, affirming the articulation, introducing, giving it more strength and emphasis. It shows that she did evolve her own variety of multilingual communication in the text, which might be a reflection of the habits of thought and speech patterns of the many Igbo speakers from United States, who use code-switching or second language inclusions.

This writer's strategy can be viewed as an effective means of utilizing ethnosizer mechanisms—creating a space for representation and achieving a status that is simultaneously local, international, and global. Moreover, it plays a crucial role in identity formation by giving voice to the experiences and challenges of Nigerian migrants. These migrants exist at the intersection of global influences, hybrid interconnections, and traditional values, and they find reflections of their own identities within the narrative.

According to Herbert Igboanusi (2002), the phenomenon of Igbo English is said to be found in creative writing (in novels) “as a deliberate but significant stylistic device, which arises from the influence of the Igbo language and culture on English [...] Has spawned what has been categorized as “ethnic literary tradition”, and, as such, African literature today is characterized by “linguistic diffusion and cultural diversity” (Igboanusi 2002: 2). He remarks that certainly the uniqueness of first-generation Igbo English writers, such as Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Elechi Amadi, manifests in three strategies: their experimentation in language, in recreating distinct Igbo discourse in English and in stylistic innovations. He concludes that their writings demonstrate a good instance of so called “Igboization of English” (Igboanusi 2002: 2). With regard to the Adichie’s works, many researchers claim that she consciously follows what has come to be referred to as “the Achebe model” described by Anyonkwu (2011: 81).

The deployment of supra-linguistic, para-verbal nuances such as folklore, proverbs, wise sayings, folksongs and other allied forms of language games, stylistic strategies which emboss and semiotize the Africanity or the sense of place in the novel. Much as Nigerian (African) writers have preoccupied themselves with the fleshpot of the African past, the question of content did not bother literary critics as such. But the issue of form was another matter.

Indeed, we get Ifemelu asking her friend Ranyinudo, “Have you read *Things Fall Apart*?” (425), with an angry mood because of Her friend’s attitude that making suicide for people who live in America like Dike is “a foreign behavior” (425). In line with this, Adichie admits: “I like to think of Achebe as the writer whose work gave me permission to write my own stories’[...] Achebe is the most important writer for me, and so every opportunity I have to pay tribute to him I’ll take it (Adichie 2008:42). Thus, the form consists of certain narrative strategies that are used in order to make the works truly and authentically Nigerian, but still remaining in the migrant context. However, what is foregrounded in the novel is not only the unified Nigerian migrants national identity, but the diversity of African experiences and many variant points of views from characters that are different with regards to ethnicity, race, gender, social class, age.

The chapter so far explores the analysis of narrative voice in both novels, focusing on two key aspects: the narrator's relationship to the story and the narrator's perceptibility. It first examines the narrator's involvement, distinguishing between heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narration. *Americanah* is primarily narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator, meaning the narrator exists outside the story world. Additionally, the narrator is omniscient, capable of revealing characters' internal thoughts and describing the physical actions of multiple characters simultaneously. In contrast, Dinaw Mengestu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* employs a homodiegetic narrator, where the narrator is also a character within the story.

The second section of the chapter investigates the narrator's perceptibility—whether they are easily noticeable or not. *Americanah* predominantly features a covert narrator, while *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* employs an overt narrator. However, traces of overt narration can also be identified in *Americanah*. With this discussion concluded, the next chapter will focus on the next narrative strategy: narrative level.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### NARRATIVE LEVELS ANALYSIS

The analysis in this chapter begins with the nature of narrative levels employed in *Americanah*. It focuses on the analysis of blogging as an embedded narrative strategy. After identifying their existence, the analysis then proceeds to the relationships of the embedding and the embedded texts in the novel. Finally, it concludes the chapter by exploring the functions and the themes developed through these embedded narratives, especially blogs.

Although the study has been conducted targeting on both novels, this particular chapter centers on Adichie's *Americanah*. This is because, unlike in Dinaw's novel, this strategy is most prominently employed in *Americanah*, particularly through the incorporation of blogs as an innovative narrative strategy. As a result, the discussion in this chapter leans heavily on Adichie's novel, and sometimes takes quotes from Dinaw's novel when necessary.

Depending on the level of the story they are narrating, narrators can be categorized as either extradiegetic or intradiegetic. An extradiegetic narrator is one who narrates the primary or out side story, which means they exist outside the events being told. In contrast, an intradiegetic narrator is one who narrates a story within the frame narrative. When an event is told from within the frame narrative, it is considered an intradiegetic narrative, and the narrator who tells it is an intradiegetic narrator.

Genette's (1980), Bal (1985) and Rimmon-Kenan (2002) are the prominent scholars to explain the concept using their own terminologies. Genette's extradiegetic and intradiegetic narrative has been used in the study. Whereas, regarding to the naming of multiple embedded narratives, the present study adopts Rimmon-Kenan's terminology to avoid redundancy. In novels like *Americanah*, a novel which contains more than three embedded narratives, repeatedly stating the narrative and narrator of each story becomes awkward.

## 5.1 Stories within Stories: Narrative Embedding as a Narrative Strategy

People who are far apart rely on various communication methods, such as phone calls, text messages, emails, blogs, and other preferred means, to stay in touch. Likewise, characters in the selected novels have used these methods to communicate. We can consider Adichie's *Americanah*, for instance, as a romantic novel, basically a romance between two major characters - Ifemelu and Obinze. However, it is surprising that they spend very limited pages together in the novel. We have seen them communicating through mobile texts, emails, and rarely letters. They also communicate through Ifemelu's blogs. In addition to their personal mediums, Obinze, equally with other audiences, gets information on different issues from Ifemelu's blogs and even reacts to some issues of the blog posts.

However, the traditional ways of communication like phone calls, text messages, emails, and letters are less importantly utilized by the major character in *Americanah*. Instead, she become obsessed with blogging. The narrator told us that the idea of Ifemelu to use blogging emerges because of the advice by one of her friends, Wambui:

That evening, Ifemelu wrote a long e-mail to Wambui about the book store, the magazines, the things she didn't tell Curt, things unsaid and unfinished. It was a long e-mail, digging, questioning, unearthing. Wambui replied to say "This is so raw and true. More people should read this. You should start a blog." (295)

As clearly stated, Ifemelu was familiar in using e-mails. We can get her sending obinze e-mails (305) and letters (160). Although writing a blog was unfamiliar to her, she chose to use a blog for having larger audience in one hand, and telling Wambui what happened through e-mails "was not satisfying enough" (296) in the other hand. Thus, it is obvious that the emergence of blog in the novel is to have a larger audience or to reach to those who "chose silence, who had become black in America" (296). The narrator narrates that Ifemelu became obsessed with experience sharing from different people especially with black Americans. She wanted to disclose the stories digging and questioning the "unsaid and unfinished things". And this way of communication could give her freedom to address more people whom "she longed for other listeners and to hear the

stories of others'(296). Since the employment of blogosphere is a very important strategy in the novel, discussing it separately in detail is important.

### **5.1.1 Narrative Blogging as an Embedded Narrative Strategy**

Adichie's *Americanah*, published in 2013, introduces to a new approach to writing a frame narrative. With the recent advancement in technology, literature has become expanded into the virtual world in the form of blogs on the internet. Adichie's novel makes use of this as an opportunity to incorporate blog writing in the novel. Although it is a new approach to an old literary device, incorporating blog posts throughout the novel is a form of frame narrative.

The novel employs a multi-layered narrative structure. At the first degree (Gennett's extradiegetic) narrative level, it is the third person omniscient narrator who narrates from different perspectives. The next level is the second degree narrative (Gennett's intradiegetic) level where Ifemelu writes and posts blogs on different topics. Beyond this is the third degree (Gennette's metadiegetic) narrative which arises from blog comments by blog visitors on different topics. We can also get responses for the blog comments. Let us see the nature of the level of narration in the following extract:

...but the most comments, by far, were for Ifemelu's piece about the Niger-politan club. "Lagos has never been, will never be, and has never aspired to be like New York, or anywhere else for that matter....." The second commenter wrote: *my cousin came back....., she saw students standing in line for the bus and she said, "Wow, people actually stand in line here!"* Another early commenter wrote: *Why should Nigerians who school abroad have a choice of where....* That comment sparked more responses than the original post had" (421-422)

An extradiegetic narrator narrates the first degree narrative as most comments are because of Ifemelu's blogs. We then get the second degree narrative (the blog) is narrated by Ifemelu the blogger. Then, we get a commenter about the blog. The narrator's voice "that comment sparked more responses' clearly indicates the presence of respondents for the comment, and it is clear that

the responses are by a different narrator. The second commenter's cousin, for example, can be considered the fourth person who shared her view about students. Here the blog is the most important element which is directly narrated by the blogger herself. It is the blog content that attracts many individuals to comment. The comments are diverse depending on the ideological differences of the respondents. It helps readers to understand the story from different perspectives. Hierarchically, we can draw the agents of each narrative as: the narrator → the blogger → the blog commenter → the comment responder.

This type of narration presents a complex situation because the narrative levels follow no clear pattern. The result is that it does not amount to a structural system that would explain the relationship of the narrative parts. In some instances, the extradiegetic narrator presents the blog contents from the meta-metadiegetic level. We can see three levels of narrations in the following example:

“Years later she would blog about this: “On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know.” A Congolese woman wrote a long comment in response: She had moved to Virginia from Kinshasa and months into her first semester of college begun to feel dizzy .....” (158).

In this example, the extradiegetic narrator cuts across all the possible levels of narration in the novel as follows: The first level of narration is the narrator's voice telling us that Ifemelu, the major character, wrote a blog. The second level is the blog itself which is written by the major character herself, and the third level is a comment by a Congolese woman about her experience of panic attacks in America.

Here, there are three agents or narrators of three different stories: extradiegetic narrator, the major character and a minor character respectively. The extra-diegetic (first degree) narrator introduces readers as there is a blog which is written by the major character. But she never tells readers what the blog is about, rather makes it to be narrated by the intra-diegetic (second degree) narrator. It is because the important element here in this scenario is the title of the blog, and the authority of the blog is Ifemelu. It is about non-American blacks suffering from illness, which is one of the serious issues in diaspora fictions.

Since the blog is the mouth of many diasporas in America, other than narrated by the extradiegetic narrator, this important concept is narrated by the blogger herself for emphasis to have the effect of intimacy with the readers. Here, readers can read the title of the blog equally with the narrator character. However, unlike the voice by Ifemelu, the comment by one of the major characters (a Congolese woman) is compiled and narrated by the narrator, not by the character herself; readers couldn't get her exact utterances rather informed what she replied to Ifemelu's blog. It shows that her comment is not as important as that of the blog itself by the major character. The narrator's intention here is to present that the blog has readers and people had the same experience in USA. In this instance, we can say that the extradiegetic narrator presents the blog contents from the meta-diegetic level. In addition to the blogs, there are also embedded texts in the form of letters and emails. The following is a discussion of epistolarity as an embedded strategy in *Americanah*.

### **5.1.2 Epistolarity as an Embedded Narrative Strategy**

In addition to blogs, which is common in *Americanah*, the novels under study also employ other channels of communication. In such a big novel with 477 pages, the protagonists Ifemelu and Obinze, spend very few pages together. They are separated for the majority of the novel and can only communicate through texts, emails, and letters. The narrator uses these channels of communication to show how transnational individuals must adjust not only to find new relationships in their host country, but to maintaining relationships with those they leave behind. Relationships are an essential part of identity formation as they shape a sense of belonging, which is a basic human need for motivation.

According to Maximilian Feldner (2018), contemporary Nigerian writers often depict the practice of writing letters in their fiction and incorporate the letter's generic properties into their narrative prose. For him, letters in his selected novels indicate the extent to which a character is still attached to their homeland. Together with other embedded narratives like blogs, letters have also been employed in *Americanah*. They are involved in the protagonist's return home. Although Ifemelu has gained citizenship and successfully built a life and career for herself in America, she increasingly gravitates back towards Nigeria and Obinze, her boyfriend she

separated from when moving abroad. Even though she has several relationships with American men, Obinze retains a central role in her life. Overall, their love story provides the main narrative of the novel and their eventual reunion marks its endpoint. Thus, letters, in the shape of e-mails, help them to tentatively get reacquainted after hardly having been in touch for thirteen years. It is in an e-mail that Ifemelu tells Obinze about her plans to return:

Ceiling, kedu? Hope all is well with work and family. Ranyinudo said she ran into you some time ago and that you now have a child! Proud Papa. Congratulations. I recently decided to move back to Nigeria. Should be in Lagos in a week. Would love to keep in touch. Take care. Ifemelu. (19)

Ifemelu has obviously planned her return before getting in contact with Obinze, but her use of “Ceiling”, her term of loving word for him, signals the significance he has had in her decision-making process. It is the word she used to call him when they were in Nigeria before their move to abroad. He became very happy because of the word she used after many years because “in the last email from her, sent just before he got married, she had called him obinze” (19), but her words became changed in her letters. This shows that their e-mails help them to successfully rekindle their relationship, after a few failed attempts at establishing contact earlier. Ifemelu had been struggling with depression in her first years in the United States, and Obinze trying to survive in England as an illegal immigrant. Their e-mail exchange a few years later, by contrast, provides them with the opportunity to get close again, among other things by talking about Obinze’s mother’s death. His response for her email “thank you for the good wishes, I have never been happier in my life” (19) shows that letters help them smoothing their relationship and meet again after about thirteen years of departure.

In addition to the e-mails conveying the characters’ investment in their love story, writing e-mails to Ifemelu also helps Obinze to come to terms with his experience of living in England as an illegal immigrant for a few years. He had been deported just before he was able to go through with a sham marriage that would have provided him with a visa and allowed him to stay permanently.

He began to write to her about his time in England, hoping she would reply and then later looking forward to the writing itself. He had never told himself his own

story, never allowed himself to reflect on it, because he was too disoriented by his deportation and then by the suddenness of his new life in Lagos. Writing to her also became a way of writing to himself (372).

In addition to the smoothening of their love story, emails help characters free themselves from different traumatic experiences. When Obinze's mother died, he became really sorry and he finally wrote her a long letter about the death of his mother. An hour later, Ifemelu replied with "a rush of heartbroken words". After reading her response the narrator told us that "her email made him happy, seeing his mother through her eyes made him happy" (371)

As a result, e-mails are not only an instrument of re-establishing contact, but also have a therapeutic function, as Obinze can finally free himself of his disappointment about the forced return and address the difficulties he had during that period. At times he read her emails, he felt happiness and hope for the reunion of their marriage.

Unlike *Americanah*, Dinaw's novel is not rich in such kind of narratives. Except getting letters in some parts of the novel, other Medias like emails are not common. The first is the letter written from Estifanos's uncle to President Carter:

Dear President Carter,

I am writing to you as a recent immigrant to the United States, I have come here from Ethiopia, where I am sure you know there is currently a bloody war happening..... For many ages, the United States and Ethiopia have been close allies..... I am confident that with US assistance, Ethiopia will be able to return to her former state immediately (123-124)

As clearly stated, the aim of the letter is reporting the situation of Ethiopia to the United States. It strongly requests to get aids from Europe at that critical time. The letter is narrated by the intradiegetic narrator who is among those people "for whom nothing is left in their home country" (123).

Another incident is the leaflets written for Estifanos's Logan Market. When he opened his own store in Logan Circle with the help of Kenneth, the first thing was drafting a leaflet which says:

Logan's Market. A New Community Store to serve all of your needs. Sharing

freshly stocked produce, canned goods, and general household needs at GREAT PRICES! (143)

The letter which Estifanos sent to Judith is another embedded narrative. After he decorated his store with Naomi, he wrote a note to Judith, Naomi's mother:

Sorry for leaving before tea the other day. I was not feeling too well. I have some Christmas presents I want to give you and Naomi. Maybe I can drop them by your house later this evening? (152)

Unlike the letters in *Americanah*, these letters seem usual and follow the formal letter writing. After writing the note, he folded it twice, wrote Judith's name across the front. It is because of the character's background. At that time the medium of exchanging information was mainly letters. The discussion on narrative levels so far is about the nature of narrative levels. After showing that the novel is rich in embedded narratives, it is important to see the relationship between them.

## 5.2 Relationship between Narrative Levels

Genette (1980:232-233) differentiates the main types of relationships of narrative levels that can connect the metadiegetic narrative to the primary narrative in which it is inserted. For him, the first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis discussing on the second narrative as an explanatory function. The second type involves of a purely thematic relationship, therefore implying no spatio-temporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis: a relationship of contrast or of analogy. The third type involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfills a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content a function of distraction, for example and/or obstruction.

Mieke Bal (1985:57) observes that when the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, we gradually forget the fabula of the primary narrative: "this apparently loose relationship between primary and embedded text is relevant to the development of the primary fabula". Another possible relationship between the two texts presents itself when the two fabulas are related to each other. This structure has two possible meanings; either the embedded story

explains the primary story, or it resembles the primary story. In the first case the relationship is made explicit by the narrator narrating the embedded story; in the second the explanation is usually left to the reader, or merely hinted at, in the fabula.

Genette (1980:232) refers to this relationship as one of “direct causality”. He further explains that these kinds of embedded narratives seek to answer the question “what events led to the present situation?”

In *Americanah*, the narrator provides us with background information about the blogger (Ifemelu) and the blog. Readers are introduced to the blog in the first chapter of the book in which blogging is stated as the task of the major character:

They were conditioned to fill silences. If they asked what she did, she would say vaguely, “I write a life style blog.” Because saying “I write an anonymous blog called *Raceteenth or Various Observations about American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes by a Non American Black)*” would make them uncomfortable (4)

This is an indication to the reader that the blog is an important part of the novel and its story. The blog in *Americanah* has an external introduction. From the outset of the novel, readers become aware of the presence of blog and get a feel of what the blog is about when the narrator mentions some posts in the blog and a visitor comments on the next pages of the novel.

Here, the secondary narrative (the blog) and primary text have a close relationship. There is spatio-temporal continuity between the meta-diegesis (second degree narration) and diegesis (first degree narration). This relationship is not of direct causality. The second narrative takes on an explanatory function.

Some of the stories in the novel also resemble one another and the blog is intertwined with the primary narrative. Contained in the blogs are incidents of interest that Ifemelu experiences or observes in her day to day life. There is a repetition within the blog of events that the reader has already seen in the primary text.

An example is when Ifemelu works as a babysitter for a white family that lived in a grand stone house with white pillars; she encounters a carpet cleaner who is hostile to her because she is black and a black should not own such a stately house. By remembering his physical appearance, she then would post as:

“She would begin the blog post “Sometimes in America, Race is Class’with the story of his dramatic change, and end it with: *It didn’t matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked. In America’s public discourse, “Blacks’as a whole are often lumped with “Poor Whites”. Not Poor Blacks are Poor Whites. But Blacks and Poor Whites. A curious thing indeed.* (166).”

Before the blog, readers are told by the extra-diegetic narrator about the feeling of the major character as she, was anger on the carpet cleaner, because he never expected to find her with white pillars in that in a grand stone house. Her experience with the carpet cleaner (white in color), which is narrated by the first person narrator is repeated in the blog post, which is narrated by the second level narrator.

Another example is the blog on the expensive lifestyles of some young Nigerian women posted in “The Small Redemptions of Lagos’(422). The blog post is about Ranyinudo, Ifemelu’s friend. Before the post, on an earlier page is a description of Ranyinudo that matches the blog.

“Ifemelu... wondered if she would be like Ranyinudo, working for an advertising company, living in a one bedroom flat whose rent her salary could not pay...dating a married chief executive who bought her business class tickets to London “ (389).

The blog then reads in part;

“There are many young women in Lagos with Unknown Sources of Wealth; they live lives they cannot afford. They have only ever travelled business class to Europe but have jobs that can’t even afford them a regular ticket. One of them is my friend a beautiful, brilliant woman who works in advertising” (422).

Regarding this, Bal (1985:60) defines resemblance between two fabulas as follows: “we speak of resemblance when two fabulas can be paraphrased in such a way that the summaries have one or more striking elements in common”.

In the case of the two blog posts cited above in one the resemblance with the text is that both texts address the issue of race in America using the same incident. In the second the blog and text are a social critique on the lives of certain women in Nigeria. When confronted by Ranyinudo for airing her story in public, Ifemelu says “Your story is so common” (422). Ifemelu uses Ranyinudo’s life story to talk about women “who define their lives by men they can never truly have and are crippled by a culture of dependence” (422).

To sum up, it is not possible to understand Adichie’s *Americanah* without blogs. If the narrator wants to raise some important issue, the best strategy she uses is making the major character to blog. These embedded blogs can increase the credibility and authority of the narrative. All the extradiegetic narratives in the novel assure for the authenticity of the narrative they embed. The embedding texts do not just present the embedded text; they provide a context for the embedded narrative, credit it to a specific person and establish its credentials.

So far, the study has examined the nature of the narrative levels in the novel. It has also looked at the relationships between the first degree (extra-diegetic) narrative and second degree (intra-diegetic) narrative and concluded that the relationship is one where the embedding narrative justifies the embedded narrative. This discussion leads us to look at the function of the embedded texts and how it contributes to develop novel’s thematic concerns.

### **5.3 Functions of the Embedded Narratives**

It is the authors’ choice to employ multi layered narrative techniques in their works for various reasons. The common uses include: for aesthetic purpose as a means of adding diversity to the narrative act, dramatic impact, sharpening characterization, developing thematic concerns and increasing the complexity of the narrative. This particular section focuses on the roles of the embedded narratives in the novels under study, specifically the functions of blogs in *Americanah*.

Narratologists like Genette (1980) and Bal (1985) have forwarded possible functions of embedded narratives. Rimmon-Kenan (2002:95), based on the works of these narratologists, argues three types of embedded narrative functions, in which these functions sometimes present separately, or sometimes in combination. These are actional, explicative and thematic functions of embedded narratives. Actional function is noticed where the telling itself progresses the plot, and explicative function is when the embedded narrative explains the diegesis. Thematic function is found when the embedded narrative functions as *Mise en abyme* in French, stories that reflect in some way the narrative around them. This study begins with the analysis of these Rimmon-Kenan's functions of embedded narrative and then expands to other functions revealed in the novel-*Americanah*.

### **The Explicative (Explanatory) Function**

Readers may face with ambiguities on the primary narrative if they could not get full background information on the reasons or motives which led to the emergence of the existing story. Embedded narratives serve as an answer to this type of questions that arise in the primary narrative. This function helps readers to understand how the events in the primary narrative came to be. All these narratives, explicitly or not, according to Genette (1980:232), answer a question of the type “what events have led to the present situation?”

Ifemelu's blog in *Americanah* explains different approaches to race, gender, ethnicity and beauty both in Nigeria and in the United States of America. From the title of the blog: “Raceteenth or Various Curious Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Blacks”, it is clear that Adichie wants to tackle race from an African perspective. By making the protagonist of the story as a blogger, the narrator approaches these racial issues from an outsider's perspective (through Ifemelu). It helps to avoid the subjectivity that may come from an American Blacks because of their history of slavery and earlier racist practices which they were subjected to. The narrator avoids being didactic about the issue of race through the blogs.

In most parts of the novel, the narrator presents an issue at the primary level, then she inserts a blog which explains the “why” and “how” of the situation in the primary text. Since the blog

allows the public to comment on the issues at hand, it plays a complementary role while facilitating explanation of the primary text in the novel.

Some instances are when Ifemelu argues the problem of race in America. Racism is expressed as a major problem of American blacks in different parts of the novel. There is a scene, for instance, where Ifemelu has not been considered as female by her white classmates because of racial divide. Although her classmates like Abe liked Ifemelu enough because of Ifemelu she was smart funny, and even attractive, they did not see her as female (192).

Later in the novel, Ifemelu became romantically involved with Curt, a wealthy white man. During their relationship, she experiences racial prejudice directly by white people. She saw on the faces of the white women the expression of the question “why her” (292) at times Curt introduced her as his girlfriend.

One day, when they walked into the restaurant, the host asked Curt “Table for one?”, and the owner of the bed and breakfast in Montreal refused to acknowledge her and looked only at Curt (294). Ifemelu then felt slighted by this treatment but she could not tell Curt because he would say she was overreacting. Finally, when Ifemelu starts her blog, her first post involves the prejudices she experienced when seen with a white man and the racially slanted magazines. Remembering these experiences, she ends the blog with words she remembered a long time after that post and recited at the dinner table of a French and American couple:

The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable. But real deep romantic love, the kind that twists you and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved. And because that deep romantic love is so rare, because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved. (296)

As a reaction for the comment by Haitian poet, who had dated a white man for three years, this post explains her brutal honesty about the problem of race in America. Early in the novel, the poet argues that race was never an issue for them, and Ifemelu repeatedly reacts by saying

“That’s a lie” (290). Through this blog post or narration, the novel expresses anger at the idea of the extensive of the race issue under the carpet by saying “race is not an issue” or race does not matter (291).

The narrator has also used blog posts to explain the meaning of concepts around the race issue that could not be explained in the primary text. In the blog post “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: A few Explanations of What Things Really Mean” (350), for example, three basic issues has been captured which the narrator thought that they should be clear to non-American blacks. First, the ambiguous natures of Americans when handling conversations on racial issues have been discussed; it is because they become uncomfortable with race. They are reported to refer to race using abstract terms such as “simplistic” or “complex”, in which they use to shut up blacks to raise racial issues (350). Secondly, the blogger discusses how diversity has different meanings to blacks and whites as:

“Diversity means different things to different folks. If a white person is saying a neighborhood is diverse, they mean nine percent black people. (The minute it gets to ten percent black people, the white folks move out.) if a black person says diverse neighborhood, they are thinking forty percent black” (351).

The third issue raised in this post is the Americans attitude towards “culture” when they mean race. Here, the blogger strongly made clear definition to differentiate between how they felt for the work of art done by whites and by blacks that if a certain film is liked or done by white folks, they say it is “mainstream”; whereas , it means black and poor and potentially dangerous when they say urban (351).

In addition, another definition is read on one of the lengthier posts, spanning close to two pages with a title “What Academics Mean by White Privileges, or Yes it Sucks To Be Poor and White but Try Being Poor and Non-White” (346). The post focuses on explaining at length the imbalances created by racism. The blogger strengthens her idea explaining the situation about what would happen if a black person was found in possession of drugs and if a white person was found in a similar situation. The post reads “the white guy is more likely to be sent to treatment and the black guy is more likely to be sent to jail” (346). Thus, the blogger effectively describes the meaning of academics to whites’ privilege; how they are academically privileged relative to

blacks.

Moreover, the posts in “Raceteenth” blog in *Americanah* help the reader to trace the histories around the race issue. It explains to the reader how the current situation arose and why the race issue remains unresolved. In the post “Friendly Tips for the American Non-Black: How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness.” (325), Ifemelu forwards the ways in which the whites offer alternative explanations about racial issues and how they want to wish away the past. In this post she archives history to anchor the reader on the race issue as:

Dear Non-American Black, If an American Black person is telling you about an experience about being black; please do not eagerly bring up examples from your own life. ...Don't be quick to find alternative explanations for what happened. Don't say “Oh, it's not really race, it's class. Oh, it's not race, it's gender... A hundred years ago the white ethnics hated being hated, but it was sort of tolerable because at least black people were below them on the ladder. being American means you take the whole Shebang, America's assets and America's debts, and Jim Crow is a big ass debt. Don't say “Oh Racism is over; slavery was so long ago.” We are talking about the problem from the 1960s not 1860s. (325-327).

In the post, historical events among other incidences: slavery, Jim Crow, blacks stepping off the curb because a white person was passing, white women standing outside schools shouting “Ape” because they did not want their children to mix with black children, has been clearly mentioned. It gives the reader background information on why the racial issues wound still irritates. After listing the do's and don'ts of the appropriate way whites should respond to blacks discussing race, at the end of this blog post, she finally invites the two races to a possibility of a friendship where there is mutual understanding and respect. She strongly advise them to ask questions for clarity when they feel uncomfortable as possibilities of friendship connection and understanding (327). In general, the blogs stated above and related posts are strategically used to explicate the external narration by an extra-diegetic or first person narrator.

## Actional Function

When the very telling of the embedded narrative progresses the plot, it is considered that the embedded narrative occurs as actional function. This function bases from Genette's (1980:233) third type of function where such an embedded narrative: "involves no explicit relationship between the two story levels: it is the act of narrating itself that fulfills a function in the diegesis, independently of the metadiegetic content- a function of distraction, for example and/ or of obstruction".

There are other characters from the primary text in *Americanah* who are involved with the blogs either directly or indirectly. In one of the blog posts, one of Ifemelu's friends, Ranyinudo, for example, is upset that she thought as Ifemelu had written about her. Ifemelu had posted a blog about "the expensive lifestyles of some young women in Lagos". Then, Ranyinudo calls Ifemelu and says "It is obviously me! Look at this! Ranyinudo paused and then began to read aloud" (422). This post was then taken down by Ifemelu.

Similarly, Paula like Ranyinudo also reads a blog post to her friends. She also requires her students to read Ifemelu's blog. It is noted that Obinze read the whole archive of Ifemelu's blog posts, and he even forwards his reaction for her blogs. The significant parts of the blog posts are formed based on some of the Ifemelu's experiences and her observations about life and the other characters.

It is true that Blaine, one of her boyfriends, contributed a lot to the blog indirectly by influencing Ifemelu through his comments. He reminded her that what he thought was her role as a blogger and what the purpose of the blog should have been. He told her responsibility as "remember people are not reading you as entertainment; they are reading you as cultural commentary. That's real responsibility. There are kids writing college essays about your blog" (312). Thus, because of these and other related cases, the embedded posts serve as an actional function the extent that the other characters make a contribution to the development of the blog.

## **Thematic Function**

Rimon-Kenan (2002:92) defines the thematic function of the embedded narrative as “one that establishes a relationship of analogy, that is, similarity and contrast between the narrative levels” (92). Genette (1980:233) also states that purely thematic relationship “implies no spatiotemporal continuity between metadiegesis and diegesis; a relationship of contrast or of analogy”. Based on these two definitions of the thematic function of embedded narratives, it is not easy to get such kind of embedded narratives nested for this specific purpose. It is because they exist as a form of continuity in space and time in the events related in the embedded narratives and embedding

In addition to the functions of embedded narratives by Genette (1980) and Rimmon-Kennan (2002), the study endeavors to discuss some other functions of the embedded texts in a novel. These include aesthetic function, advancing oral story tradition, creation of multi-vocality and illusion of reality. The following is the discussions of these functions of blog posts embedded in the primary narrative of the novel *Americanah*.

## **Aesthetic Function**

Aesthetics, in its broad sense, is closely related to the philosophy of art. It concerns with the nature of art and the concepts in which individual works of art are interpreted and evaluated. When it comes to literature, it refers to the investigation of the nature and perception of beauty in a piece of literary work. Peter Lamarque (2007:6) argues on the questions in which aesthetic characterizations have implication for “how the work appears, what impact it has, what is salient in it and what merits aesthetic attention”. The present study argues that the use of embedded narratives is one of the author’s strategies for the aesthetic quality of the novel in Adichie’s *Americanah*.

In the novel, the embedded narratives positively affect the presentation of the story to the reader. Blogs in different parts of the novel, for instance, begins with an indented and bolded typeface, which increases the aesthetics of the story by revealing break to the readers. Here, the embedded narratives provide obstruction in the continuity of the whole, and this obstruction affords the narration with more ups and downs. Because of the insertion of the blogs, thus, the continuity of the primary narration is suspended and a heightened suspense is created. These can also break

the monotony of reading the primary narrative, which bids a shift in the readers' thoughts of the reading process.

In one of the blog posts, the metaphorical blog which discusses hair as a race metaphor, is inserted to cool the tension raised by a heated discussion on race and relationships at a dinner party. On day after Barak Obama became a Democratic Party candidate, one of Obama's supporters at a dinner party in Manhattan said, "Obama will end racism in this country" (290). But Ifemelu didn't agree with them that racism will never be easily stopped. When the poet from opposes Ifemelu's idea, then, a tension arises because of Ifemelu's reaction by repeatedly saying, "That is a lie." This argument lasts covering six pages of the book. After this long and hot discussion on race, the blog is inserted as:

"Imagine if Michelle Obama got tired of all the heat and decided to go natural and appeared on TV with lots of woolly hair, or tight spirally curls...She would totally rock but poor Obama would certainly lose the independent vote, even the undecided Democrat vote" (297).

Actually, the blog covers almost one and half pages; the tone of the blog is that of discussing race with a light touch and is peppered with humor. Thus, readers are expected to get relief from the humor contained in the blog. Through the description of Michelle Obama's hair as woolly and the effect of that on Obama's election results, the heavy matter of race is discussed though in a humorous way.

In addition, the embedded narratives help to increase the aesthetics of the novel by breaking the monotony of the primary narratives. For novels which has bigger amount of pages like *Americanah*, a novel which spans four hundred and seventy-seven pages; the blogs give the reader a much needed break from the monotony. Readers can read the story with fresh perspectives, offered by Ifemelu and her blog followers, because of the blogs appeared both within the chapter and sometimes at the end of the chapter,

Creating suspense is the other aesthetic effect of the embedded narratives. As happened in the above extract about race, a reader has to wait for the reading of the embedded narrative to pass so that the experience of suspense is lengthened. Any questions raised in the readers' mind have to be held in suspense till the embedded narrative is read for a possible resolution.

When readers had been in a wonder because of Ifemelu's fight with Blain, one of her boyfriends, the narrator quits the existing story, thus, an instance of suspense is created. The blog follows this statement: "When months later, Ifemelu had the fight with Blaine, she wondered if Shan had fuelled this anger, an anger she never fully understood" (337). While the reader is still wondering how and why the break up will take place, the blog is inserted: "Is Obama Anything but Black?" which is totally unrelated to the preceding passages. Here, readers should wait the event in suspense reading the inserted blog.

The introduction of new plot lines is also another effect of using embedded narratives. The protagonist of the novel, Ifemelu, relies on two basic plot lines in *Americanah*. The first is a story based on her journey from Nigeria to USA with her life experience there for thirteen years, and the latter is from USA to Nigeria, and her new life with her boyfriend, Obinze. When she returns to her home country later in the novel, she transits into a home that is different from what it was thirteen years back. The novel captures an aspect of the returnee narrative through a post in the blog: "The small Redemptions of Lagos"(421). This section about the Nigeropolitan Club highlights the arrogance of Nigerian returnees who used to meet weekly to lament the differences between Lagos and the cities they previously lived in. Through this post, Ifemelu satirizes their pretentious attitudes and urges them to embrace the way of life in their homeland. This post highlights the definition of an "Americanah" presented earlier in the novel:

"They roared with laughter at that word "Americanah" ..... and at the thought of Bisi...who had come from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurred *r* to every word she spoke" (65).

In general, Adichie uses the embedded narratives to enhance the reader's understanding of the primary narratives while providing her readers an experience of combinational delight unique to the reading of stories within stories.

## **The Blogger as an Oral Storyteller**

Africa is a continent with full of oral story telling traditions. Before the emergence of using modern narrative techniques to present their stories, oral literature had been used as a medium of presenting stories, and this trend has an impact on modern African novelists. Regarding this, Obiechina (2013:199) observes that, “the oral tradition impulse is strong in the modern African novel, which embodies this experience especially because the writers themselves are products of both oral traditions and literate education”. Achebe in his debut novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), for instance, uses diverse forms of oral traditions to illustrate the Igbo tradition and culture. To revitalize the past, the author, using these manifestations of traditions, juxtaposes the identity of Igbo society in the mode of oral story in the novel.

Third generation Nigerian writers, a category in which the author of the present novel belongs, have positive influences of their past legends in the presentation of their stories. Roger Kurtz (2012:25) describes these writers as “laboring under an obvious but understandable anxiety of influence as the giants of Nigerian literature who preceded them cast long shadows”. Heather Hewett (2005:78) also witnesses the case that “Adichie like her peers is directly engaged with the Nigerian literary canon and is furthermore making a case for her inclusion in it”. Embedding is a common tradition, and considered as one of the characteristics of oral story telling. Thus, embedded narratives as Herman (2013) argues, describe the historical consciousness of the present. They are used as a bridge between oral and written narrative.

Thus, Adichie, in her fiction, is keenly aware of her role and identity as an African writer, which she demonstrates by drawing from the abundant traditions of oral storytelling. She incorporates narrative embedding, a technique closely associated with the oral storytelling heritage. Here, the first degree narrative level functions in a parallel way to a storyteller’s role. The embedded narrative is an artistic device that enhances the performance of narrating. Irele (2001:24) argues that the interplay between orality and literacy is:

..... the dominance of orality in the cultural environment of African expression seemed to offer possibilities for validating the endeavor to state the relevance of orality not only to a general understanding of the processes involved in human communication but also, and in particular, to formulate an all-encompassing idea of

imaginative expression, one that would point toward a universal concept of literature.

The above quote points to the benefits of creating a situation where oral culture is assimilated and reorganized in written fiction. First it enhances artistry in a piece of work. Secondly it aids in stimulating the process of understanding a text. Thirdly, as Obiechina (2013:199) notes “as a means of giving maximum authenticity to the writing...writers look to their indigenous poetics to create works that draw upon their living oral traditions to enrich forms, techniques and styles through literate education”.

Like a performer in oral storytelling, some of the characters like Paula and Ranyinudo are seen reading aloud the blog posts as a result of enacting a performance. Unlike the other blogs by the same blogger, these characters tend to teach their students orally by reading aloud. Here, readers are allowed to read the blog and listen to the characters’ reading performance simultaneously. The phrase “read aloud” in the statements “Ranyinudo paused and then began to read aloud” (422), and “Paula brought out her phone and fiddled with it and then began to read aloud” strengthens the argument.

In general, writing fiction is the contemporary analogue to telling tales. As Griswold (2000:3) stated, “Nigerian novelists see themselves as storytellers; they tell stories of a particular kind and with a particular intent. Here, Adichie becomes an interpreter of her own land of origin for a mainly her English-speaking audience.

In a widely quoted TED talk titled “The Danger of a Single Story” (2009), Adichie has confronted the issue by commenting on the power of stories to influence people’s elaboration of reality: “Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower and to humanize”. Stories, here, indicates literary fiction but also a wider range of activities - including lecturing, especially when lectures are peopled with characters and anecdotes as in Adichie’s case. Her most viewed and popular lecture, a TEDx Euston lecture titled “We Should All Be Feminists’(2013), for example, is filled with stories featuring herself and others, such as her first encounter with the word “feminist” through a friend’s comment, or her being prevented to be class monitor in primary school although she had scored better than all the other pupils because the class monitor was supposed to be male.

## Creation of Multi-Vocality

According to Bakhtin (1981), the strength of a novel stems from the co-existence of and the conflict between the different types of speeches, namely the speech of characters, the speech of the narrators and the speech of the author. This study approaches the Bakhtinian idea of vocal multiplicity as a narrative strategy from the perspective that vocal multiplicity forces the reader to attend to the multi voiced potential of the text and interpret it.

The embedded narratives permit the author to create a “voice” for the narration (for example if he or she wants to use any special language effects) a voice which can be of a more closely involved narrator. This voice enables the reader to understand the effects of the action since they are immediate and clear. This second narrator or third narrator as the case may require can be made as inexperienced or as sophisticated as best serves the author’s purposes. This narrator may be faintly or distinctly separated from the author himself.

Through Adichie’s double voiced discourse, her intentions are expressed although in a refracted way. The embedded narrative serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions, the express intention of the character speaking through his or her writing and the refracted intention of the author. The effect is that when the author’s words are introduced into the characters’ speech, they assume a new meaning and interpretation.

There are various voices and languages presented both in the primary narrative and the embedded narrative. To mention few, the voices of Nigerian village, Nigerian town, accents of Nigerians who have just arrived in America and try to imitate the Americans, Americans and British mispronouncing of African names to a Nigerian who’s lived in Britain for a while and has a British wife. The voice of the blogger and the respondents to the blog post add to the multiple voices in the text and the reader thus engages with the complex nature that is the human life.

As indicated in Kabusu (2012:63), in an interview with Brooke Obie of *Ebony* magazine, Adichie addresses the critique of using the blog as a “literary cheat” and editorializing through it. She explains that incorporating her commentary on race directly into the primary narrative through regular dialogue would have been ineffective. Adichie states, “*I think that what I wanted*

to say (about race) and how I wanted to say it was in the kind of voice that would not have worked in dialogue or any other way (than through Ifemelu's posts)." Adichie through those voices confirms the Bakhtinian idea that the author arranges all other voices and directs the interactions of those voices. The author organizes the diversity of voices to achieve a desired end.

### **Illusion of Reality**

The inclusion of an embedded narrative which can be oral or written is rationalized or motivated in a realistic way to preserve or imitate the illusion of reality. This illusion of reality consequently lends to both the embedded and embedding narrative credibility. Traditionally several devices are used by writers to achieve this goal. Examples include; gathering of characters who tell each other stories, dreams or hallucinations experienced by a character, the discovery of written manuscripts, diaries, letters and such other categories.

The use of the blog in *Americanah* creates the appearance of reality by Adichie's accuracy in her simulation of how blogs work. This technique transports the reader to the blogosphere and the reader becomes part of the audience of the blog. Blogs provide centralized locations at which readers find web-based journals known as blogs and bloggers are able to find each other. Ifemelu's blog has many followers, she edits her posts, comments and reactions of the blog are recorded in the text. She pulls down posts when she wants to and eventually she exits from that particular blog zone. She then begins another blog when she returns to Nigeria. All the events in the novel make for a believable story.

Another way Adichie achieves the illusion of reality in her fiction is by empowering the characters that author the embedded narratives. The characters involved all author from a point of experience. The experiences they have given them the authority to write the embedded narratives. The reader then believes the embedded narratives because he or she has shared the experiences with the character in the embedding narrative. The narration in the primary text verifies the information in the embedded narrative.

In the analysis so far in this section, an attempt has been made to analyze the functions of blogs to the development of themes and plot of the story. The following is on the functions of her blogs

as an embedded narrative for the characters.

#### **5.4 Characters as Authors in Embedded Narratives**

Irene de Jong (2004:10) in “Narratological Theory on Narrators, Narratees, and Narrative”, states that narratives within narratives may have a function to the characters. She says “In the case of an embedded narrative told by a character it may also be relevant to distinguish between the function it has for secondary narratees, the characters who are listening and for the primary narratees”. This points to the usefulness of the embedding for the characters; the characters may have been pushed or motivated by something to author the embedded narratives.

The blog set up by Ifemelu serves an important function in her life. As she pens down her thoughts and feelings on race, we see a metamorphosis in her. From the young lady who was unsure of herself when she arrived in America to a confident lady poised to return to Nigeria. Ifemelu uses the blog as means to understanding race and its complexities but also protecting herself from being swayed into accepting the falsehoods surrounding the race issue in America. The blog offered a release to Ifemelu purging the pressures of immigrant life especially the racism. The blog gave Ifemelu opportunity to evaluate her life, finally she senses the emptiness. The following excerpt explains:

Readers frightened and exhilarated her...made Ifemelu, nervous eager to be fresh and to impress, so that she began, over time to feel like a vulture hacking into the carcasses of people's stories for something she could use. Sometimes making fragile links to race. Sometimes not believing herself. The more she wrote, the less sure she became. Each post scraped off yet one more scale of self until she felt naked and false (5).

Prior to the book's opening scene, Ifemelu had written her final post and closed the blog. Ifemelu feared she had lost touch with part of herself and makes a decision to return home. Ifemelu feels that her personality is shaped by the blog and that she is losing her core to the blog. This revelation helps her to move to the next phase of her life.

The blog attracts comments from people affected by the issues Ifemelu blogs about. The blog

gives them opportunity to vent out or to find solace from the knowledge that their experiences are not uncommon. When Ifemelu blogs about her experience with depression, a Congolese woman posts a long comment in response about a similar experience she had (158). Through the blogs Ifemelu opens up a space for people to talk about issues that disturb them but have nowhere to air them. A comment on the blog “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” said “Thank God somebody is finally talking about this”(421). We therefore note that the embedded narratives serve different functions for different characters including those who author them.

### **5.5 Development of Themes through Embedded Narratives**

Adichie’s novel addresses multiple themes like love, race, identity, violence, immigration, sexual exploitation of women, sexuality and others. This section focuses on the themes expounded by the embedded narratives with an aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the embedded narrative technique. The novel uses the embedded narrative, i.e., blogs as a foregrounding strategy.

The term foregrounding highlights the distinctive stylistic features characteristic of literary texts. The NTC’s Dictionary of Literary Terms (1998:87) defines foregrounding as “calling attention to something—a rhythm, a character, an idea, a viewpoint—by placing it in the foreground against a background.” Leech and Short (2007:207) argue that “in order to ensure the point is conveyed, the novelist often repeats the same idea in various ways and at different structural levels.” They further note that “incident and mode of description combine to embody one of the major themes of the novel.” In this regard, Adichie employs embedded narratives to draw attention to her primary thematic concerns, placing these narratives in the foreground against the background of the larger embedding narrative.

Race is the central theme developed through Ifemelu’s blog in the novel. Although the subject of race has been debated for decades, it remains a critical and timely issue. One poignant example in the novel is the portrayal of Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential election, which serves as a backdrop for exploring racial dynamics. The novel starts with Ifemelu on a train to Trenton to braid her hair. During the journey, she recalls a conversation on a plane where she had to explain her “lifestyle blog” to a man seated next to her. The man asks, “Ever write about adoption? Nobody wants black babies in this country, and I don’t mean biracial, I mean black. Even black

families don't want them." (4) Ifemelu blogs about this exchange and the post becomes her most-commented-on entry for the month. Positioning this dialogue in the opening chapter signals to the reader that the novel is deeply concerned with race, while the blog serves as a platform for dissecting these issues.

The theme of rejection tied to race is also reflected in Dike's life, particularly in his attempted suicide. From a young age, Dike faces racism and alienation. For example, when the school computers are hacked, he becomes the prime suspect solely because he is black. Even in his church, the pastor greets other children warmly but says to Dike, "What's up bro?" (349), making him feel singled out. Dike expresses his alienation by saying, "I feel like I have vegetables instead of ears, like large broccoli sticking out of my head" (349). This sense of rejection and difference leads Dike to feel unwanted, pushing him to the brink of taking his own life. Through Dike's struggles, the novel poignantly illustrates the devastating personal impact of racism.

The concept of race first becomes apparent to Ifemelu after her arrival in the United States. She reflects, "I come from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America" (290). It is the covert and overt racism she observes and experiences that defines her new identity as "black." Ifemelu is particularly frustrated by the silence surrounding racial issues—the things that remain "unsaid and unfinished" (296). This frustration drives her to seek connections with others who share similar experiences. She wonders, "How many other people had become black in America?" (296).

Encouraged by her friend Wambui, Ifemelu starts a blog informed by her daily encounters with racism. These encounters shape the titles and content of her posts, which focus exclusively on race. The blog becomes a narrative device that isolates race as a central theme in the novel, allowing Adichie to foreground the issue.

The blog's unique structure and nature make it an effective tool for developing the theme of race in *Americanah*. Its design mirrors the characteristics of real-world blogging, lending authenticity to its role in the novel. Ruth Aylett and Sandy Louchart (2003:1), in "Towards A Narrative Theory of Virtual Reality," argue that a story's mode of delivery and its medium significantly influence its content and intensity. Similarly, the blog in *Americanah* addresses race differently

than the primary (extradiegetic) narrative. Its format facilitates multiple responses to the issues raised, allows for the editing or removal of posts, and enables wider dissemination through reposting on other platforms. This flexibility and reach amplify the impact of race-related discussions, making the blog an innovative tool for engaging with the novel's central theme.

The presence of racism inherently raises questions about identity. Identity encompasses both how we define ourselves and how others perceive us. It is a process deeply rooted in language and culture, reflecting our position in the world, others' perceptions of us, and our understanding of them. Paul Gilroy (2014:15) highlights the complexity of identity, arguing that historians should rethink their approach to documenting the past. He proposes that "cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single complex unit of analysis in their discussion of the modern world...and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective." This perspective emphasizes that "black is black," rejecting hierarchical or segmented notions of blackness.

Adichie's *Americanah* challenges these assumptions by delving into the nuanced and multifaceted nature of identity. It problematizes the idea of a singular or uniform black identity, instead exploring the diverse categories and experiences of identity within the context of race, culture, and belonging. Through her narrative, Adichie reveals how identity is shaped by both individual experiences and broader societal constructs, highlighting its fluid and complex nature.

Diasporic communities exist across various chronotypes, shaped by the continuous process of creolization. Globalization has further complicated these dynamics, creating diverse categories of identities even within diasporic groups. In the blog post "Understanding America for the Non-American Black: American Tribalism" (184), Ifemelu outlines the complexities of racial hierarchies in America. She describes a racial "ladder," stating, "White is on top, specifically White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (alluding to the possibility of another type of white). American Black is always on the bottom, and what's in the middle depends on time and place."

To illustrate this hierarchy, Ifemelu provides the example of Jewish identity in America. On the racial ladder, "Jewish is white but also some rungs below white." This nuanced depiction of racial stratification highlights how race and identity are not fixed constructs but rather fluid and context-dependent, shaped by historical, cultural, and societal factors. Through her blog, Ifemelu

sheds light on the intricate layers of identity and belonging within the diasporic experience, emphasizing the intersectionality of race and cultural perception.

In other blog post “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America You Are Black, Baby” (220), Ifemelu confronts the reluctance of some Non-American Blacks to identify as black upon arriving in America, as they come from countries where blackness is not a defining issue. This highlights the creation of a racial identity, "black," that immigrants must grapple with in the American context. Ifemelu examines the stereotypes and generalizations imposed on black people, noting that blackness in America often erases individuality.

She points out how black individuals are collectively judged for the actions of others within their racial group. For example, if a black person commits a crime, others who "fit the profile" are subjected to scrutiny and suspicion. Black people are frequently pressured to overcompensate for this collective judgment—apologizing for the actions of others or constantly monitoring their own behavior to avoid perpetuating stereotypes. Ifemelu’s tone in this post is scornful, mocking the absurdity of the assumptions that white people often hold about black individuals. By using satire, she underscores the pervasive and unjust racial dynamics that reduce black people to a monolithic identity, denying them the freedom to exist as individuals.

Chinua Achebe (1988:29) emphasized the African writer’s responsibility to educate and challenge readers. In his essay “The Novelist as Teacher”, he argues that writers should not shy away from the task of re-education and regeneration, stating that they should “march right in front” in this mission. He further asserts that the African writer’s role is to combat the internalized notion of racial inferiority that was instilled during the colonial period, confronting the “disaster brought upon the African psyche”.

Adichie appears to have embraced Achebe’s call, positioning herself at the forefront of the effort to re-educate, particularly in reclaiming ownership of African narratives. Alongside her contemporaries, she has found a platform through her writing to explore new ways of expressing and articulating the African experience. In *Americanah*, Adichie not only defines the role of the

African writer but also asserts who should be telling the African story. She does this through her carefully chosen characters and the embedded narratives they create.

Adichie highlights the need for contextualized readings of African literature and the importance of telling authentic African stories. Early in *Americanah*, the novel emphasizes the writer's role and voice. For instance, Sapphic Derrida, a frequent commenter on Ifemelu's blog, praises her for using her "irreverent, hectoring, funny and thought-provoking voice to create a space for real conversations about an important subject" (5). This description captures the essence of what an African writer should embody—bold, fearless (irreverent), capable of stimulating thought (thought-provoking), and able to foster genuine conversations about significant issues. In this way, Adichie demonstrates how African writers can engage readers with compelling and relevant narratives that challenge preconceived notions and encourage dialogue.

The genesis of Ifemelu's blog stems from her desire to share her personal experiences and hear the stories of others. She feels obliged to address the "unsaid and unfinished" (295) aspects of race and identity in America. Ifemelu is curious about how many others have experienced the transformation of becoming "black" in America and the sense of disconnection it brings, feeling as though "their world was wrapped in gauze" (296). In response, she creates a space where issues surrounding race can be openly discussed, using her blog as a platform for these conversations.

Ifemelu's choice of a blog, a medium that is new and unfamiliar to her, can be seen as a metaphor for the writer's role in pushing boundaries and experimenting with new forms of communication. By using the blog as a medium, Ifemelu not only explores a new way of sharing her concerns but also reflects the idea that writers should embrace diverse platforms to engage with pressing issues. Adichie's decision to embed the blog within the novel highlights her belief that writers should not shy away from innovative mediums. Through Ifemelu's success as a blogger, Adichie exemplifies how new forms of expression can be powerful tools for tackling important societal concerns.

The authorship of the blog is clearly indicated in its title: "Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the Subject of Blackness in America." This title emphasizes the

significance of the author's identity, specifically highlighting Ifemelu's perspective as a Non-American Black. By explicitly stating her identity in the title, Adichie distinguishes this particular voice from others and underscores the validity of Ifemelu's perspective on blackness. It suggests that being a Non-American Black grants Ifemelu a unique qualification to discuss the complexities of blackness in America, emphasizing how identity shapes one's authority in speaking on such matters.

The narrator emphasizes the importance of truth-telling, particularly for African writers. Ifemelu's remarks, "*That's a lie...It's a lie*" (290), underscore the necessity of confronting and exposing truths, especially about sensitive topics like race. These statements serve as a call for writers to embrace honesty in their storytelling and highlight the vital role of authenticity in African literature.

Ifemelu's frustration with the pervasive silences and avoidance surrounding race compels her to challenge these omissions. She urges people to "unzip themselves," encouraging open and honest discourse. This is exemplified through her blog, which becomes a platform where uncomfortable truths are laid bare and where the complexities of race are candidly examined. Through this approach, the novel advocates for breaking societal silences and fostering spaces for raw, unfiltered conversations about race and identity:

This is for the Zipped-Up Negroes, the upwardly mobile American and Non-American Blacks who don't talk about Life Experiences That have to Do Exclusively with Being Black. Because they want to keep everyone comfortable. Tell your story here. Unzip yourself. This is a safe space. (307)

Through the characters, Adichie shows who should write the African history and the concerns that plague Africa. Her opinion resonates throughout her work but it is through the exemplification in the embedded narratives that she makes her opinion clear.

Closely linked to the issue of addressing the authorship of the African story is the attitude of silence. In *Americanah*, Adichie addresses the issue of silence through Ifemelu's uneasiness about the silences that surrounded the race question. Ifemelu had a desire to tackle things "unsaid and unfinished" (295). Ifemelu wonders "How many other people had become black in America

(296)?” Adichie uses the embedded narratives to raise the question of why Africans choose silence. This helps the reader to reflect on the issue of silence and its consequences.

Ifemelu invites both Blacks and Whites to engage in dialogue and to ask questions. This is seen in the blog “Friendly Tips for the American Non-Black How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness”(325). This blog calls for objectivity in the race discussion- “American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame...ask questions...listen”. The Blacks are encouraged to speak about the race issue and the whites are encouraged to listen and ask questions about the concerns by blacks about race.

In this chapter so far, the study endeavors to discuss the authors’ narrative strategy of using another story under the primary narrative. The nature of these embedded narratives, their relation with the embedding texts, and their functions and development of themes has been discussed in detail. The following is the discussion of the last narrative strategy selected for this particular study i.e., narrative time.

## CHAPTER SIX

### NARRATIVE TIME ANALYSIS

The third narrative strategy chosen for this study is narrative time. As is noted in the preceding chapters, narrative time has three major facets: order, duration and frequency. Order refers to the chronological or anachronological representation of events in a discourse that may happen sequentially or simultaneously in a story. Therefore, order seeks to answer the question -When??. The second facet of narrative time is duration which refers to the time span of events lasted in the story and the time span of events lasted in the discourse. Thus, duration answers the question - How long?. The third facet is frequency. Frequency deals with the relationship between the number of times an event appears in the story and the number of times it is narrated (recounted or enacted) in the narrative. Hence, it answers the question - How often? Thus, the analysis includes how these facets of narrative time are strategically employed for the development of the events in the novels under study.

#### 6.1 Order

As discussed earlier, order refers to the relation between the events of the story and the sequence in which they are presented in the discourse. The order of presentation in both novels does not correspond to the order of happenings of events in the story; it contains references back and forth in the discourse. Most of the time, the narrators narrate the events which happen in the past and such parts of the narrative can be called analepsis. Likewise, the narrators present the events which happen later: such parts of the narrative can be called prolepsis. The following considerations provide an argument about all attempts of discussion related to order in the novels under study.

The text's beginning has implications for its form because of the mode of narration, and the temporal structure in this opening creates pluralistic ways of narrating. It means that the narrator, accordingly, use different ways of narration to narrate past, present and future events of the story. In fact, events occur in their normal sequence in the story; they are distorted in the presentation of the novel under discussion.

The arrangement of events in both novels is nonlinear structure which further adds to its readability. In both novels, the story begins in medias res– in the middle of the assumed sequence of the story. Adichie’s *Americanah* begins at the present day, when Ifemelu decides to return back to Nigeria, and then, jumps back to Ifemelu’s adolescence to coincide with present-day Ifemelu thinking about her past. The book periodically jumps back to present day before going back to another point in Ifemelu’s life. Likewise, the narrator in Dinaw’s novel begins in narrating events which occurred after seventeen years of the beginning of the story by describing the effect without first revealing the cause of the events, that is, the cause of migration of Berhane, Stephanos, Joseph and Kenneth to America.

Consequently, the presentations of the story in both novels begin in the middle of the assumed sequence of the story. The narrators begin in narrating events which occurred after thirteen and Seventeen years of the beginning of the story in Adichie’s and Dinaw’s novels, respectively. They intentionally told the effect first without revealing the cause of the events, that is, the cause of migration of different characters.

Beginning at the middle of the story has implications to the development of the story. Adichie’s *Americanah*, for instance, opens at a turning point in the life of protagonist Ifemelu. The novel begins with Ifemelu going to get her hair braided at “Mariama African Hair Braiding” in Trenton, New Jersey. It starts at the end because, at this point, Ifemelu has already determined that she will stop writing the blog she started in America and she will return to Nigeria. After thirteen years in the United States, Ifemelu is about to return to Nigeria: “So here she (Ifemelu) was, on a day filled with the opulence of summer, about to braid her hair for the journey to home” (8).

While sitting in Mariame’s hair salon in Trenton, New Jersey, Ifemelu recollects some significant moments from her life in Nigeria and the USA. She remembers the life of her Igbo family in Lagos, her studies at Nsukka University and her romantic relationship with Obinze. Ifemelu’s memories of Nigeria are interwoven with her memories of the US: the time she spent with her father’s sister Aunty Uju and her nephew Dike, her path to education and employment and her several romantic relationships.

The concept of time space that Ifemelu's memories embody is neither singular nor linear, but shot through with memories of other times and spaces. The perception of time space in terms of interconnected fragments plays out not only at the thematic level, but also at the level of form. As it traces Ifemelu's trajectory, the narrative provides insight into three different settings: Nigeria before Ifemelu's move to the US, the US after Ifemelu's move there and Nigeria after Ifemelu's return. These stages are not related chronologically, however. Ifemelu's life in Nigeria before her departure and her life in the US are described through memory-elicited analepses at the time when Ifemelu is about to return to Nigeria. Shifting between the hair salon in Trenton, and the Nigeria and the US from earlier in Ifemelu's life, the narrative undergoes rapid spatiotemporal shifts that seem to collapse boundaries between the different time spaces defined in it.

### **6.1.1 Analepsis as a Strategy of Telling African Problems**

As mentioned in chapter three, analepsis is a narration of past events which do not chronologically belong to the order of the primary narrative (the moment of the narrative or the first narrative) of the discourse.

In the novels under study, this strategy is dominantly used by the narrators. Although they are found in a different background, protagonists of both novels are African descent. Thus, the narrators of the stories used to tell stories reminding their back experiences, and compare this nostalgia with the life in their host country. The following is a discussion about how African major problems, which made diasporas like Stephanos migrated to other countries, are manifested in Dinaw's novel using analepsis as a strategy.

Analepsis plays a crucial role in Dinaw's *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears* (2007). The protagonist of the story, Stephanos, frequently revisits his life in Ethiopia, his father's tragic death, and his flight from political instability. These flashbacks serve to juxtapose his past life with his present disillusionment, highlighting the unresolved trauma that shapes his worldview. The contrast between the past and present also serves to emphasize the immigrant's struggle with nostalgia and the difficulty of reconciling their previous life with their new reality. Here is an example:

When I opened my store ten years ago, Logan Circle was predominately poor, black, cheap, and in a depression that had struck the city twenty years earlier and never left. Most of streetlights that surrounded the circle were burned out, leaving the neighborhood perpetually pitched in to strange darkness more frightening than pure black (36).

In this episode, the narrator- character, Stephanos presents the past situation, in which he opens his store ten years ago. At this point, he gives the background information to the readers about his past life. Depending on his presentation, the readers can scrutinize his past life and then they compare it with his current life situation. So, the presentation of events that occurred in the past as analepsis helps the readers to give emphasis on the possible sequential order of the story.

As mentioned in the theoretical frame work, Genette (1980) distinguishes analepsis into external analepsis, internal analepsis and mixed analepsis based on the information it carries, with relation to the main narrative (the first narrative).

External analepsis is a narration of past events that do not belong to the temporal chain of the main narrative. In the novels under discussion, the narrator presents many events outside of the main narrative through external analepsis. The following extract, for example, manifests external analepsis in the novel.

.... I saw the corpses that lay rotting on unpaved dusty roads with the words "traitor" or "communist" written in blood on the chest, and the furious mobs that roamed the streets at night. I saw my father's face just before three soldiers in tattered uniforms escorted him out of our house. I never saw what death did to his face, whether or not it aged it, or perhaps even restored it to some long-vanished peaceful state. I did imagine it involuntarily while lying awake and staring across the living room to the glass doors that lead out to the balcony. I sometimes imagined leaping off (my emphasis). In my mind, his face was untouched, free from any bruises or scars the soldiers might have left his eyes, nose, and mouth impossibly perfect. I gave him a wonderful funeral complete with all the rites the dead deserve: a body, casket and flower along with a priest and a coast of

mourners who followed him all the way to his family's burial just outside Addis (119-120).

Stephanos goes back to narrate the traumatic situation of his father's death. Here the main narrative of the story deals with Stephanos's life in America, but Stephanos presents the distance past event (the death of his father). Therefore, this event does not belong to the order of the main narrative of the novel and it gives the background information to the reader.

In this type of recalling the past event, the readers get clear and detailed information about the event that took place early, and also readers can share the narrator's feelings. As depicted in the extract, Stephanos presents the loss of his father and what the soldiers did on his father in front of him disturbs his life. Here, the author employs this technique of narrative to portray the political situation of Dergue regime. From the narrator's (Stephanos's) feelings, the reader can understand how the government is tyrant. Hence, external analepsis is used beyond the technical level, that is, to construct the theme of the novel.

In this case, the author employs this type of narrative technique to demonstrate the political woes of Dergue regime. His (Stephanos's) narration reinforces the event and enables the readers to interpret the past events critically on the basis of the present information. However, the main function of analepsis is informing the readers about something that happened before; it also makes the readers to give attention to analeptically presented event. Because, when the narrator is reconciling the past with the present narrative, the readers give attention to the time shift from present narrative to past narrative. Thus, this external analepsis extends the meaning of the whole text by adding additional interpretation from the previous interpretation.

Internal analepsis concerns the past events which happen within the main narrative. In this type of analepsis, the narrator reveals the past events and interrupts the main narrative of the novel under study. Here, the narrator narrates different content matters from the main narrative as internal heterodiegetic analepsis or similar content to the main narrative as internal homodiegetic analepsis. Therefore, internal analepsis is discussed below into sections: internal heterodiegetic analepsis and internal homodiegetic analepsis respectively.

As mentioned above, heterodiegetic analepsis refers to the different content matters from the main narrative. In *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*, the narrator-character, Stephanos presents his first year college education in America as the main narrative, but before he finishes it, he narrates another event:

During my one year in college, I brandished my title as frequently as possible. I introduced myself as a student to every person I met, often without their asking. I made it the reason d' être for my being in America, ...even as the famine in Ethiopia briefly dominated the news, along with hints at the longstanding civil war in the north, images of starving children with bloated bellies and fly-covered faces were ubiquitous. When pressed for response, all I could do was shake my head and agree that yes, what was happening in Ethiopia was indeed a tragedy. But what did I know any of this? I was a student, studying engineering (98).

The narrator, Stephanos describes Ethiopian starvation and civil war (which happens during the Dergue regime) before he finishes the main narrative. Here, the main narrative of the extract is his first year college studying in engineering, but he interrupts the main narrative and narrates another event, that is, Ethiopian starvation and civil war, which happen in the past. In fact, he narrates his first year education in past tense, it is considered as the main narrative because most narratives are told in past tense; but the newly introduced events are different from the main narrative, which deals with Ethiopian starvation and civil war.

Hence, Stephanos's presentation of the Ethiopian starvation and civil war before finishing the main narrative is internal homodiegetic analepsis. The inserted narrative is differing in its concern of events from main narrative and also it deviates the order of the story. Because, Ethiopian revolution is the cause of the beginning of the story, and it should come in the beginning of the novel, this indicates that the story is narrated analeptically. In this case, it is used to remind the past events. As a result of this narrative deviation, readers change their outlook of both the main narrative and the secondary narrative. And they can interpret this event as one theme of the novel. It means that the readers give focus to the distance of time that is created between the main narrative and the secondary narrative.

When coming to the internal homodiegetic analepsis, the inserted narrative concerns the same issue with the main narrative of the discourse. It may be completing analepsis or repeating analepsis. As stated in the theoretical framework, repeating internal homodiegetic analepsis refers to the same event of the main narrative of the discourse. However, the narrator repeatedly presents the same event in different contexts; this study takes one example for the discussion to avoid redundancy. Therefore, the study takes the following example as evidence of this kind of internal analepsis:

It was only a few weeks earlier that Mengistu Haile Mariam had declared the start of the Red Terror in crowded city square by throwing to the ground bottles filled with red ink to represent the blood of the revolution's enemies (218).

The main narrative of the story deals with the situation of Ethiopian revolution during the Red Terror, but the narrator recalls the past event, i.e. the declaration of Ethiopian Red Terror which occurred before two weeks of Ethiopian revolution. Here the narrator interrupts the main narrative to narrate the declaration of Ethiopian Red Terror. In fact, the narrated event is the cause of the beginning of the story, and the narrator recounts it after a lengthy time passes in the story. It refers to the same content with the main narrative. Even if the narrator presents this event for the purpose of linking it with another event of the main narrative, it has a significant role for the development of the theme and the plot of the text. So, the narrator repeatedly narrates Ethiopian Red Terror in different context for the purpose of constructing the plot of the novel under discussion as well as for making the narrative event clear.

However, each repetition of the event demonstrates some similarity, it occurs in a different context and it can be understood differently. Therefore, repeating internal homodiegetic analepsis links different contexts of the text, thereby contributing additional interpretation of the repeated event; because the repeated event deals with similar event of the main narrative of the story.

The other category of internal homodiegetic analepsis is completing internal homodiegetic analepsis. It is evidenced by the extract below:

There are only three blocks left between General Logan and me I can just make out the edge of the circle, its empty benches and the tree shaking lightly in the wind. There was a park in Addis that looked like the Logan Circle does from distance, with a few minor adjustments that was the other reason I moved into this neighborhood. The first I saw General Logan riding on his horse, surrounded by his beches and dying clumps of grass, I was reminded of the late afternoon walks my father and I used to take the summer, when I spent a part of each afternoon walking with him in his office (216).

Here, the main narrative deals with the General Logan in America, but the narrator, Stephanos, inserts another issue, which has the similar content with the main narrative. Nevertheless, he presents American General Logan as the main narrative, he narrates about Ethiopian park in Addis that he experiences in Ethiopia. Thus, the narration of his past experience in Ethiopia is used as internal homodiegetic analepsis. This narration is inserted in the main narrative to fill the information gap, which is previously left in the normal sequence of the story line.

Mixed analepsis starts before the beginning of the main narrative (i.e. outside of the main narrative) and its extent arrives a point later than the beginning of the main narrative or beyond the main narrative. In the novel, the narrator -character, Stephanos narrates the past event by mixing with the main narrative. He starts his narration about the past event, which is illustrated in the excerpt below:

The only presents I had bought in the past seventeen years had been for my brother, Dawit. I had stopped sending him toys years ago, though, once I realized he was no longer a child but a teenager, and a stranger. I imagined my parents being received in Addis with a certain justified contempt, and so instead of packages stuffed with toy soldiers and robots, I send Christmas cards full of empty promises to come home one day soon. Christmas was still three weeks away in Ethiopia. I would not receive a call until then. Normally by that point, any possible nostalgia for the holiday would have long since passed. It had been

easy to continue living in on the Ethiopian calendar at first. I could still remember that Christmas fell twice a year, once in December and again in January, but as the year accumulated, it became harder and harder to remember that there two halves to the narrative. Last year, I did not remember to call home until it was already late into the evening. My mother sighed heavily into the phone when she heard my voice (153).

As the extract depicts, the narrator- character, Stephanos narrates his past event before the beginning of the main narrative. Here, the main narrative deals with the coming Christmas. His narration about the presents of the past Christmas for his parents before the beginning of the main narrative indicates external analepsis, and soon he narrates a future event (i.e. the coming Christmas) as the main narrative, and again he starts recounting the past event in the room of the main narrative, and he narrates the past as internal analepsis.

In this case, external analepsis and internal analepsis are intermingled. This narration shows a time shift from past to future and from future to past. This kind of mixed analepsis shows the narrator's rapid shifting of time. Here, the author is modifying natural chronology for a purpose, i.e, to depict the mental state of the narrator, his psychological portrait as represented by his associative realization, which is the real center of time. For this reason, the effect of rapid shifting of time between past and future changes the readers' perspective towards the narrator, Stephanos's mental state. Accordingly, Stephanos's retrospection breaks the story flow to recall earlier event of the past and forwards to the future event has an effect on the interpretation of his realization of time.

Since the narrator (Stephanos) comes to America before seventeen years, in the above instance of narrative, he narrates his nostalgia of the past event and his emptiness due to the distance of time with his family. He compares his current life in America with his homeland life, by shifting the narrative movement rapidly back and forth. In this case, the readers can change their perspective towards the narrative event, and they can share his experience of life.

Similarly, internal anaepsis is noticed in when Joseph recalled the African problems of injustice and dictatorship in his country- Zaire. The main narrative is about the ability of Joseph in playing chess. When Joseph plays chess with his friends, he always defeats them easily. It is because of

his experience of playing the game in his country who has been described as “one of the better chess players in Kinshasa” (62). Chess tournaments were common in the city in cafes and bars all night, and many people spent their time there playing the games all day since they “had no jobs, no school, no family, no money...” (62). Here, the narration about the problems observed in the city is inserted analeptically as the reasons of his skill in mastering the game. Joseph’s homeland denied him democracy and justice and he had already left her for the chess world before he migrated to USA. Generally, the homelands of the immigrant characters in the novel drove them away with horrors of civil war (red/white terror in Ethiopia, rebellions in Zaire), unrest, injustice, misuse of power, violation of human rights etc. These political woes in the cases of traumatic human rights violations, like the one committed on Stephanos’s father, humiliate immigrants and kill their interest to live and enjoy life to its fullest for the rest of their lives.

In conclusion, analepsis is used as a strategy of describing the common African problems like dictatorship, violation of rights, horrors of war and impoverishment and deprivation in the novel.

Like in Dinaw’s novel, this strategy of telling a back story is dominantly used in Adichie’s *Americanah* (2013). Majority of the novel is set in a hair salon where Ifemelu went there to get braided for her journey to Nigeria. It is surprising that the primary narrative is set in the salon until chapter 41, Ifemelu got out of the salon at page 365. There are different stories told in these big portions of the novel including her love experience with Obinze in Nigeria and the complexities she faced in United States.

One example of analepsis is a memory of Obinze which happened because of the email from Ifemelu, his love in Nigeria. Being nervous because of Ifemelu’s absence to respond his repetitive email, Obinze rolled down his the window to give money to a child beggar ran along his side. After some conversation with his driver, Gabriel, Obinze wanted to tell him as his girlfriend emailed him. Then, he just remembered and started to describe an event done in their first time they touched each other.

So why are you working as a driver instead of a beggar, Gabriel? Obinze asked, and laughed, a little too heartily. He wanted to tell Gabriel that his girlfriend from university has just emailed him. Actually his girlfriend from university and

secondary school. The first time she let him take off her bra, she lay on her back moaning softly, her fingers splayed on his head His phone rang and for a confused moment he thought it was Ifemelu calling from America (20-21)

In their email exchange, she sent him congratulations message for the birth of his child, and she decided to move back to Nigeria. He then became upset by the memories he had about their friendship, and by recalling Ifem's black American friends whom she sent him their full names. He even waked up from his dream when his phone rang from his wife, Kusi. The statement " his phone rang and for a confused moment he thought it was Ifemelu calling from America" (21) shows that he was thinking about Ifemelu and her interaction with those males in his mind.

The main narrative of the story, before the insertion of this back memory, is about Obinze's move to the Chief's house. While in the Lagos Traffic, we see Obinze reading an email from Ifemelu, and he saw a child beggar glued out- window, and some descriptions in and outside the car. Until he started narrating his past event with his girlfriend, the main story goes naturally. Suddenly, the narrator shifts the narration to the memories of Obinze he had in his past time. Surprisingly, the conversation between Obinze and his driver was not about this issue. It is whether giving money for the beggar was proper or not. After his memory, the story then shifted back to the main narrative line.

Another instance is when Obinze was intended to have marriage in England for getting a paper for American Passport, during his marriage registration, his eyes suddenly caught by one of the intended marriage lists written in blue. He remembers the name, and the narration gets back to Nigeria describing his classmate.

Behind the desk, a whiteboard was propped on a wall, venues, and dates of intended marriages written on it in blue; a name at the bottom caught his eye. *Okoli Okafar and Crystal Smith*. Okoli Okafar was his classmate from secondary school and university, a quite boy who had been teased for having a surname for a first name, who later joined a vicious cult in university, and then left Nigeria during one of the long strikes. Now here he was a ghost of a name about to get

married in England. Perhaps it was also a marriage for papers. Okoli Oka-for everyone called him Okoli Paparazzi in university. On a day Princess Diana died, a group of students had gathered before a lecture, talking about what they had heard on the radio that morning, repeating “Paparazzi” over and over..... (231-232)

There are two analeptically inserted narrations here in the above extract. The first is remembering the person whom the narrator knew him before, and the latter is describing the nick name why his classmate was called by in university. The cause of his memory is the name of the intended marriages written at the bottom of the white board. The main narrative before the insertion of this memory was about Obinze’s marriage registration. Suddenly, the name of his friend got him back in his secondary school life, which he became so impressed in. The narrator’s expression “the memory, clear as a light beam, took Obinze back to a time when “he still believed the universe would bend according to his will” (232) shows that Obinze was so delighted because he thought as if everything has been going according to his plan to go to America. After stating her premises why his name was listed there, the narrator then started to clarify why people in a university called him Okoli Paparazzi. These memories are intentionally inserted to fill the information gap for the readers understanding.

### **6.1.2 Prolepsis**

Unlike in analepsis, the discourse leaps ahead of the story order to the events which lie in the future in prolepsis. With Prolepsis, the narrator narrates events in the novel before their actual chronological order of the story.

In Adichies *Americanah*, the main phenomenon happened to the main character’s life in the story is narrated by this kind of narrator at the very beginning of the story. One of the unique characteristics of the novel is its employment of blogs which are inserted in different parts, and even written for different purposes. Regarding blogging, detail discussions have been made in the preceding chapter, i.e., narrative level. Here is only to show that the narrator is certain to tell readers that the character has made her blog successful in different cases. For one thing she told

readers that the blog attracted thousands of unique visitors, made her getting fees, had a fellowship at Princeton, and even had a relationship:

Her blog was doing well, with thousands of unique visitors each month, and she was earning good speaking fees, and she had a fellowship at Princeton and a relationship with Blaine.... (6)

The narrator in the above extract is narrating the story being outside or acting as an observer. She knows all the basic events happened in Ifemelu's life, and narrates them at a time. Throughout the novel, Ifemelu has a close contact with these three phenomena's: blogging, looking for a job, fellowship and her relationship with her boyfriends. That is the reason why the extra-diegetic narrator narrates these phenomenon from the very beginning of the novel. In this case, readers become aware of the hints which the major character faced, and finish the story in suspense.

### **6.1.2.1 *Americanah* as a Strategy of Showing Diasporas' personality**

The title of the book by itself is a mirror of showing diaspora's life in their migrated country. It emerges at the beginning of the novel which is a mock epithet for Ifemelu's personality. In Nigerian jargon, the term "Americanah" is an identity term that is premised on a person's previous experience of living in America. In an interview, Adichie defines the word as a Nigerian word that can describe any of those who have been to the US and return American affectations; pretend not to understand their mother tongues any longer; refuse to eat Nigerian food or make constant reference to their life in America.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=195598496>).

The following extract highlights the definition of the term "Americanah" which is presented earlier in the novel. Ifemelu's high-school friend, Ginika, is leaving for the US and her friends had been gathered in Ginika's house arranging her clothes. At the middle of their conversation, one of the friends, Priye, told Ginika just to make sure she could still talk to them when she came back:

"She'll come back and be a serious Americanah like Bisi," Ranyinudo said. They

roared with laughter, at that word “Americanah,” wreathed in glee, the fourth syllable extended, and at the thought of Bisi, a girl in the form below them, who had come back from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurred *r* to every English word she spoke. (65)

The narrator told us that the voice of Ranyinudo is based on her experience with Bisi, who pretended to act as American after she came back to Nigeria. That is why they “roared with laughter” because of the word *Americanah*.

Here, when we go through the novel, we get Ifemelu became Americanized in different ways. Not only in America, had her look by Nigerian fellows after she came back to her country become strange. And also, her use of American dialect, as Bisi was doing, was observed in Ifemelu’s pronunciation later in the novel. When she is back to Nigeria, her friends describe her with the name “*Americanah*”, as occurs in the title of the novel, to tease her about new Americanized way of behavior, as well as attitude toward conditions of living in her home country and sophisticated usage of American English.

It is true that Ifemelu’s personality is changed through time. First, she had been using a fake accent but she no longer continued in this way. She worked hard using her effort to improve her accent and finally became a perfect speaker in American accent as it is approved by the telemarketer, “You sound totally American” (175).

She had perfected the accent, from careful watching of friends and newscasters, the blurring of the *t*, the creamy roll of the *r*, the sentence starting with “So” and the sliding response of “Oh really”.... (173)

Likewise, we can look almost all diaspora characters as a changed personality both physically and mentally. After she came to America, and became familiar with them, Ginika decided to lose weight and looked too skinny, the shape which Ifemelu wished to have, to be liked by Americans. And also, Ifemelu became witnessed watching Ginika who totally resembles Americans: “a bottle of beer poised at her lips, her American-accented words sailing out of her mouth....” (124).

At the end, we get Ifemelu with the sense of Americanah. When Ifemelu came back to Nigeria, she became strange with the things she observed in Lagos- the weather, the economic gap between people, the beggars in the city, the cleanness of the city, etc. Because of her distorted feeling, the narrator tells us that Ranyinudo teased her often “Americanah” for the reason Ifemelu “was looking at things with American Eyes” (385). Thus, the title of the novel “Americanah” is strategically used for the Americanized life style of Ifemelu in particular and other diasporas at large. It helps readers to have a clue on the coming events of the novel, and helps them to develop suspense in the development of plot.

### **6.1.2.2 Prolepsis as a strategy of Telling Return Back**

From the beginning, readers are told about Ifemelu that she would go back to Nigeria. As the story skips in time, much exposition and foreshadowing is done through Ifemelu’s thoughts while getting her hair done in Trenton. Ifemelu’s move from Princeton to Trenton to braid her hair is an anticipation of her return from America to Nigeria. Ifemelu’s story starts in prolepsis and decides to move back to Lagos. After a long stay in the braiding salon, Ifemelu felt reckless so that she started to compose an email to Obinze “*I recently decided to move back to Nigeria*” (16). Later in the novel, we get Ifemelu who went back in Nigeria according to her letter to her ex-boyfriend. Here, readers are informed from the beginning that Ifemelu will go back to Nigeria, and read the novel expecting her journey to her homeland. It helps the plot of the story to develop suspense, and readers become sensitive to know why she decides to move back to her country.

Another instance of prolepsis as a strategy of moving back to is noticed in the conversation between Ifemelu and Aisha. When Aisha asks Ifemelu if she recognizes the Nollywood actress that appears in the film shown in the hair salon, Ifemelu says no. Whereas Aisha found that “now Nigeria film is very good.” Here, Aisha’s expression became different from Ifemelu’s experience, then, she thought little of Nollywood films with their “exaggerated histrionics and their improbable plots.” (13) Although, Ifemelu didn’t agree with Aisha’s expressions on Nollywood films, because of the difference in their socioeconomic backgrounds, the narrator told us that she “nodded in agreement because to hear “Nigeria” and “good” in the same sentence from such a strange Senegalese woman was a luxury in which “she chose to see in this an augury of

her return home” (13). Actually, the truth that she was moving back to her home is revealed at the beginning of the novel. Everyone “became surprised expecting an explanation, when she told them about her return back. Except her friend in Lagos, Ranyindo, people like Aunty Uju didn’t accept her decision that they see “the gravity of her foolishness’(14). From the expressions which highlights Ifemelu move back to her home and will check the truth there, readers get awareness about the protagonists return and read the novel expecting narrations on how and why she will return, as characters in the novel did, in suspense.

### **6.1.2.3 Prolepsis as a Strategy of Advice/Warning**

Different advices and warnings have been given by multiple characters. The essence of their advices and warnings are considered as alarms of the protagonists to be careful in their host country otherwise their life will be corrupted. It clearly forecasts the life of African diasporas at large.

In Adichie’s *Americanah*, the first scene is when Ifemelu got warning from her taxi driver. The story begins with a conversation between the major character, Ifemelu and her Ethiopian taxi driver in Baltimore, the city where Ifemelu came to love it next to Philadelphia. When he became informed that Ifemelu is an African immigrant from her Nigerian accent and her wearing style, the driver warns her as: “You have to be very careful or America will corrupt you” (206). This advice transfers the message that she would face challenges unless she would be very careful, and can be considered as a strategy of telling Ifemelu’s future life in the country. Later in the novel, after passing through many complexities, Ifemelu used to reference this person in her blog about non-American blacks. The narrator says, “When years later, she wrote the blog post “On the Divisions Within the Membership of Non-American Blacks in America”“ (206). Here in the blog, non-American blacks are represented by the taxi driver. The blogger wrote this thinking about him as the narrator proves the truth as “she wrote about the taxi driver, but she wrote of it as the experience of someone else...” (206)

Another event is when Ginika advised Ifemelu on different issues. After Ginika picks up Ifemelu from the bus station, she told her to be aware of the terms she uses to communicate with Americans and to understand the racial politics in the country. She warns her as “There’s some

shit you'll get from white people in this country that I won't get" (123) forecasts the challenges that Ifemelu will face because of her color in her stay in the United States. Later, Ifemelu eventually blogs about it in a post titled "Why Dark-Skinned Black Women-Both American and Non-American-Love Barack Obama," disclosing the fact that she has begun to understand the racial politics of the social space to which she has migrated.

The separation of Ifemelu's and Obinze's relationship and Ifemelu's engagement with different men has also been forecasted early by Ginika. The statement says "Obinze had better hurry up and come to US, before somebody will carry you away. I know you have the kind of body they like here"" (124). As per Ginika's speech, later in the novel, we get Ifemelu having relationships with different men like Curt and Blaine who used to admire her in different aspects.

Unlike in *Americanah*, prolepsis is rarely used in *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*. However, it has a significant role in the development of the narrative as well as the construction of theme. External prolepsis occurs when the narrator narrates future events out of the main narrative. It means that the narrator does not interrupt the main narrative while narrating the future event. In the following example, the narrator presents Joseph's future plan without interrupting the main narrative of the text: "Joseph laid out his plan that night for getting his college degree and then his PhD from the University of Michigan (146)". Here, the narrator reports Joseph's future plan of education from the University of Michigan without interrupting the main narrative. This narrative is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the future temporal experience of Joseph. Because, in the moment of this narrative, Joseph is working in the hotel as a waiter and he does not fulfill his interest of education. In this time, the suspense about his dream of education, that is, whether it can be fulfilled or not affects readers. In the above narration, readers can contemplate the narrator's current status and they can understand what he wants. In this case, external prolepsis is used to interpret the current situation of the story as well as the future events of the story.

Internal prolepsis concerns the narration of future events or episodes within the main narrative. It interrupts the main narrative in order to present later events of the story. Like internal analepsis, internal prolepsis holds heterodiegetic and homodiegetic.

Internal hetrodiegetic prolepsis refers to different characters or events in the narrative discourse. In the following example, the narrator relates events in a non-chronological order, telling us about the character; Kenneth's getting engineering degree and master's degree before his joining of the university: "Kenneth, for his part, was going to get his engineering degree and then a master's (146)". At the moment of this narrative, Kenneth does not get his engineering degree and a master's degree, but the narrator anticipates the future event, which occurs after many events take place in the story. So, the narrator narrates it before its actual time of the story order. And also the narrator interrupts the main narrative, which is about Joseph's education. Indeed, this narrative concerns Kenneth's future education, it does not refer to the same content of the main narrative. As a result, this narrative is internal hetrodiegetic prolepsis. Its function is introducing new event to the readers.

Unlike hetrodiegetic prolepsis, homodiegetic prolepsis concerns similar events or characters of the main narrative. In Dinaw's novel, characters are talking about their current life in America. At that moment, one of the characters, Kenneth presents his future thought about Stephanos's life in America as follows: "I have told you," he says. "This country is like a little bastard child. You cannot be angry when it does not give you what you want" (6). As the extract shows, one of the characters, Kenneth predicts Stephanos's future life in America. The narrator, Stephanos narrates Kenneth's utterance as a source of information to his future life in America. At this time, Kenneth's determination about Stephanos's life in America is internal homodiegetic analepsis. Here, Stephanos gets awareness about his later life in America. Thus, this anticipation experienced both by the readers and the characters, and it strengthens their psychological state of realization of the future events.

However, the episode is presented in the first chapter of the novel; it really happened after many events have taken place in the story. In this narrative instance, the author demonstrates that the displaced existence of time is beyond the temporal limits of past and present. Thus, readers can understand the existence of events within over time in which beyond the current time of narration. As a result of this, prolepsis is used to construct the theme of the novel. The following section relies on the second facet of narrative time is - duration.

## **6.2 Duration**

As discussed in the theoretical framework, temporal narrative includes information about the time each event is scheduled to start, and the expected duration of each event in the discourse. So, duration examines the relationship between the variable duration of events in the narration and their length of time in the story. To determine the duration of the discourse, this study follows both Genette's and Chatman's classification of narrative movement: summary, pause, scene, ellipsis and stretch. Therefore, the study discusses each narrative movement with examples from the novel under discussion respectively.

### **6.2.1 Summary**

In summary, the narrator accelerates the narrative movement by narrating the main event of the story. For instance, in Dinaw's novel, the narrator focuses on the theme of the narrative as: "So far we have named more than thirty different coups in Africa. It is become a game with us. We have been playing the game for over a year now." (8) The narrator in the above extract summarizes a years' event in one sentence. Here the action takes place more than a year in the story, but the narrator summarizes it into one sentence in the novel. In this summary mode of narration, the discourse time accelerates because the narrators focus on the main event of the story. Similarly, the following example depicts the narrator's acceleration of the narration movement in the novel under study:

For twenty three years she had lived in this neighborhood, thirteen of which were spend in this house, first alone, and then with her husband, who passed away eight years ago (22).

As the above extract depicts, the narrator summarizes twenty-three years of a story time into one sentence in the presentation. Because, narrating twenty-three years of event is time consuming to read it and also it is not relevant to the theme of the novel. At this point, the narrator narrates the important point of the novel and the reader. In this type of narrative mode, the discourse time is less than the story time. Accordingly, in summary mode of narrative, the duration of the discourse time is accelerated while the story time goes its own pace. It saves the readers' time by

providing the main events of the story.

Similarly, this kind of narration is noticed in Adichies *Americanah*. In general, the author utilizes summary frequently in the novels under study. So, the narrator repeatedly summarizes a long period of story time into a short passage in the novel under study. Accordingly, the narrators' modes of summary vary from one event to another event.

### 6.2.1.1 Scene

During direct conversation between the characters, the time of the story and the discourse is approximately equal duration.

In *Americanah*, scenic mode of presentation is employed in different parts of the novel. Mostly, the most important concepts in which the narrator wants readers to participate together with the characters could be narrated in such kind of presentation. One of the issues raised in the novel is Ifemelu's homeland. Repeatedly, Ifemelu was asked where she came from?, and the narrator, instead of simply telling readers that she is from Nigeria, made her to speak in her own words. When she had a phone conversation with a telemarketer,

May I ask who am I talking to?  
My name is Ifemelu  
..... "Is it a French name?"  
No, Nigerian.  
That where your family came from?  
Yes, .....I grew up there.  
Oh, really? How long have you been in the US?  
Three years  
Wow. Cool. You sound totally American.  
Thank you.

The ideas shared in the conversation above are narrated in the purely mimetic mode. Together with the characters, readers also equally participate in the presentation. Likewise, the same expressions have been noticed in different parts of the novel: when she had conversations like with Blaine, her boyfriend (177), and with her taxi driver (206).

Here, Ifemelu's biography- her name, her family, her homeland country, how long she had lived in America are considered very important points throughout the story. And such kind information should be delivered directly from the characters.

Names are the primary and most individualized marker of identity. Names often have significant meaning or are chosen in honor of loved and respected family members. Names may also indicate cultural identity. According to Louisa Uchum Egbunike (2017: 25), "Within Igbo culture, an individual's name serves as a form of incantation or prayer which is repeated each time that person is called. The importance of naming is entwined with the belief in the power of the spoken word, as to repeatedly enunciate an intention is to conceivably usher it into being". It is as though Igbo culture recognizes names as the key to reaching the core of an individual's identity.

Likewise, in *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*, there are conversations among characters. As shown below, Joseph, Kenneth and Stephanos are talking about the white woman, who rented a house next door to Stephanos:

"Guess what?" I asked them.

"What?"

"Some white people just moved in."

"Where?" "Next

door." "....."

"Next door to you."

"Yes."

....

"I think they are going to fix it up."

"Why would white people want to live next to you?"

"I don't think they know I live here."

"How do you know?"

"I saw them."

"And what did they look like?"

"Tall. White."

"How many?"

"I only saw one."

"Well then, that proves nothing."

"She was searching in her purse for keys" (14-15).

In this conversation, story time and discourse time are conventionally in equal duration; because there is no extra description of events or characters besides, to the direct conversation of the characters. In this type of presentation, the readers involve themselves and pertain what the characters say within specific time. Here, readers are addressed about the white woman – Judith who rented near Stephanos’s store, and about the nature of other characters’ relationship to her. They are also informed about the psychological variables of the narrator’s motive on the white woman and all the particular interests, desires, expectations, knowledge, and prior experiences.

In this sense, readers, together with the characters, could also ask “why would white people want to live next to” Stephanos? He is black. He is an African immigrant. And the neighborhood is full of black-Americans. Something must be wrong with them – “what did they look like?” Stephanos is saying “tall” and “white”. How could this be? He thought that she must be an investigator or officer working for the city administration just checking things. Otherwise, how could whites possibly live next-door to blacks? This is what Kenneth and Joseph, disciplined by the racism and discrimination in USA. Their pessimist feeling for the woman is not surprising. Since it was not a common act to live whites with blacks, Kenneth and Joseph developed a pessimist ideology towards the white woman.

In another part of the story, Stephanos got warning from Mrs. Davis when she asked him a very challenging question about Judith, “Why do you think a woman like that would wanna live here? Doesn’t seem right, does it?”, and his response says “It is a free country, Mrs. Davis. People can live where they like”. Although Stepahnos seems in convenience with his neighbor, it is because of his lack of knowledge about the race based prejudice and discrimination between whites and blacks as Mrs. Davis told him “What do you know about free countries? You didn’t even know what that was still you came here last week...” (23). Therefore, this type of narration, i.e., scenic narrative mode, helps readers to understand the characters’ feelings and experiences within equal amount of story time and discourse time. Readers in the above conversations share the feelings

equally with that of the characters.

In the same way, the following dialogue shows equal duration of story time and discourse time.

At four-twenty I begin to ask questions.

“How is your mother doing?”

“Fine.”

“Do you have any dinner plans to night?”

“I do not know.”

“Did she anything to you about it?”

“I do not think so.”

“Can you remember her saying she had anywhere to go tonight?”

“No.” “Think,” I said. “Did she say anything at all?” (110)

This extract shows the dialogue between Stephanos and Naomi (one of the characters of the novel). However, there may be a speed difference between the speaker in the story and the reader in the novel; normally the characters’ utterances in the story have approximately equal duration with the readers’ duration to read such dialogue in the novel. In this narrative, readers concentrate on the dialogue because the characters’ utterance is directly heard to the readers, and narrows the time of distance between the readers and the speakers. Scenic presentation makes the novel dramatic and it is important because it increases the readers’ involvement in the dialogue by giving them vital information what is happening on the characters, and also it will shape readers in the particular way the characters told it. Therefore, in this type of narrative, the readers involve themselves with what the characters do at a specific time, and also it can be interpreted as a dramatization and meditation upon the characters’ conversation. Moreover, the characters’ conversation overheard creates an allusion of immediacy of time by avoiding the narrators’ interference.

In addition to dialogue, presenting detailed action events of characters is also considered as a scenic mode of narration. Ifemelu is the novel’s primary protagonist, but long stretches of the novel are also narrated from Obinze’s perspective. In several instances the switch from a chapter where Ifemelu is the focalizer to one of Obinze’s chapters is accompanied by an e-mail, as if the narrative perspective were transferred from one to the other via that e-mail, in most cases from

Ifemelu to Obinze. Most of their emails are therefore perceived through Obinze's perspective. Scenic mode of presentation is observed when Obinze reads the letter sent from his love, Ifemelu, about her return to Nigeria:

When Obinze first saw her e-mail, he was sitting in the back of his Range Rover in still Lagos traffic, his jacket slung over the front seat [...]. First, he skimmed the e-mail, instinctively wishing it were longer. [...] He read it again slowly and felt the urge to smooth something, his trousers, his shaved bald head. (19)

In such kind of narrations, readers focus on the character's actions, therefore, the story time stops and the discourse time continues. Together with him, it seems, readers are close to characters reading Ifemelu's messages, note his reactions to them and observe him writing his responses.

### **6.2.1.2 Pause**

During descriptive narrative mode, the story time stops while the discourse time goes on in its normal pace. In the novels under discussion, descriptions of characters, landscapes, cities and events has been observed. For instance, the narrator focuses on Kenneth's physical appearance as follows:

Kenneth looks Kenyan. His skin is dark, his nose is long and thin, and yet his features are soft, almost delicate, like a child's. He is six feet tall, but is only in the past two years, since he got his job, that's he's ever weighed more than a hundred and fifty pounds. When he drunk he lifts up his shirt, blows out his stomach, and pats his protruding belly proudly (3).

While the narrator describes Kenneth's physical appearance, the discourse time is going on in its own pace. By contrast, the story time stops its movement. During this type of narration, the readers perceive what Kenneth looks like and draw his (Kenneth) image on their mind.

Therefore, during the descriptive mode of narration, the discourse time continues while story time stops. Consider, for example, the following passage, again, accompanied by extensive description of the narrator's feelings about Judith.

Her name, Judith- Judy – was the English counterpart to my cousin’s name- Yodit. When I pointed that out she shook her head, bit down on her lower lip...she was tall and narrow, with skinny arms and short brown hair cut just above her shoulders. She had slightly crooked mouth and full lips that marked her face in a peculiar way. They made her mouth seem too large for her face, and her face too small for her head, so that there was something almost doll-like about her (19).

Since the narrator describes the character- Judith’s physical appearance, the discourse time is going on its own speed. On the contrary, the story time stops in this descriptive narrative. There is no a story movement, it stops as the physical description of Judith continues. In this narrative instance, the discourse time is larger than story time. Story time is suspended as the narrator’s stream of realization focuses on the character’s physical appearance. Where the narrator describes a character, Judith in the discourse with full of images and figurative languages, the reader can easily visualize the character, Judith. Thus, it makes the text aesthetic and cinematic by providing detailed information about the characters.

Descriptions have also been observed in different parts of *Americanah*. The story of Obinze and Ifemelu set partly in Africa, partly in the Western countries, reflects events to which Adichie herself can relate – experiences of living and working in different settings within American society. Ifemelu, while traveling in different places, tries to describe the cities and persons she meets. The first lines in the novel, for instance, introduce her fascination with the distinct smell of each city she visits in America. Olfaction is closely related to memories and nostalgia, so it is appropriate that Ifemelu would characterize these places through scents:

“Princeton, in the summer, smelled of nothing...Philadelphia had the musty scent of history. New Haven smelled of neglect. Baltimore smelled of brine, and Brooklyn of sun-warmed garbage. But Princeton had no smell” (4).

Her olfactory impressions of these locations illuminate her knowledge that each is not home. She tries cities on like shoes until she realizes she is meant to be in Nigeria, as it is “the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil” (7).

Throughout the novel, Ifemelu introduces each city as having a distinct personality. None of these personalities work with Ifemelu. For example, Baltimore has a “scrappy charm” and Philadelphia holds “history in its gentle clasp” (255). When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria, she imagines Lagos with a distinct personality like the American cities. As Ifemelu did not quite fit with the personalities of those East Coast cities, it is important that she will be able to find her niche in Lagos. At first, it seems this may not be the case: “Lagos assaulted her” (475). She finds both she and the city have changed, but she cannot tell exactly in which ways, and Ranyinudo mocks her for complaining. Later, however, she writes her first blog post about transnational Nigerians who whine about conditions in Lagos after returning from the US and the UK.

In addition to the description of setting, pause is observed when the narrator describes characters in *Americanah*. It is surprising that descriptions of characters in the novel highly attached with their hair, specifically black woman’s hair. It is considered as a symbol for Ifemelu’s struggle with identity and the embedded racism in American culture and society. For Ifemelu herself, hair represented her struggle for confidence and identity as both a Nigerian immigrant and a black American. When Ifemelu first comes to America, she realizes that she is supposed to relax her hair instead of having it in braids in order to seem more professional. When she first decides to try relaxing and straightening her hair, she can smell her hair burning which I think is used to show the death of her independence and confidence due to her conforming to Western standards of beauty. She feels that a part of herself has died (being burned away) along with her natural hair. The moment she “falls in love with her [natural] hair” is a moment of self-love, confidence, and independence.

The use of hair in *Americanah* symbolizes American Black women’s overall experience being ignored and significantly excluded. After Ifemelu immigrates to America, she undergoes a process of Americanization, or assimilation into American culture, to be considered “American.” The reader’s first image of Americanization is shown inside the hair salon. Aisha, the hair stylist, asks Ifemelu, upon seeing her natural kinky hair, “Why you don’t have relaxer?” ( 15). Ifemelu tries explaining to Aisha that she likes her natural hair and how to comb it, but she finds herself “slipping into the coaxing tone of the proselytizer that she used whenever she was trying to convince other black women about the merits of wearing their hair natural” (15).

One would think that this discussion between Ifemelu and Aisha is simply about her hair, and while it is, a greater context to the conversation establishes the reality of misogynoir in America. Aisha, and several other women, feels the need to relax their hair because they have been conditioned to relax their hair due to Americanization and Eurocentric beauty standards. Ifemelu discovers the same beauty standards, “straight hair, which is more aligned with Western beauty ideals to be privileged over natural styles.

In general, description of hair plays a significant symbolic role in *Americanah* and serves as a recurring motif that reflects identity, culture, race, and self-acceptance. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie uses hair, particularly Black women’s hair, to explore how beauty standards intersect with race, identity, and belonging.

In addition to the descriptions of characters and settings, pause is also employed when the narrator make comments, judgments or evaluations on different perspectives. Both novels employ these strategies on different issues.

## **Ellipsis**

Ellipsis constitutes the omission of some part of the story time in novel under study. In ellipsis, the narrator halts events in the presentation. As mentioned in chapter two, the study discusses ellipsis into two categories: explicit ellipsis and implicit ellipsis respectively with examples from the novel.

Explicit ellipsis clearly depicts the omitted story time in the presentation of the discourse. In the explicit ellipsis, the readers easily understand the elapsed time from the narrator’s presentation. For example, the narrator leaves out some story time in the presentation, but he reveals the elapsed time clearly to the readers: “A few days later, Naomi came into the store by herself. It was the first time I had seen her without her mother (24)”. As shown in the quote, there is a time gap between the previous narrative and the moment of the narrative. But the story time passes in such a few days, that the discourse time leaps it. The narrator, Stephanos skips event that takes place in such a few days, and narrates the most important events of the story. In general, the narrator uses ellipsis to increase the reliability and to avoid unnecessary detailed information about characters and the events that occurred during the elapsed story time.

When coming to implicit ellipsis, the omitted time is not expressed numerically. Though the elapsed time is not revealed in number, the readers can discover from the chronological gap of the narrative in the novel. Here is an example of this type of ellipsis from the novel under study:

My mother and brother would forgive me for my years of neglect and distance. In the card sent with the presents, I would tell my mother that if she needed anything, she could count on me. As for Dawit, I would tell him that too much time had passed, and that I was ready to do now what I should have done years ago, which was to be a brother to him (154).

As indicated in the first line of the extract, there is a substantial time gap between the time of narration and an event that happened in the story. But this narrative movement collapse the temporal distance between the narrated event and the time of the narration, a time beyond the narrator's control; because the narrator associates the omitted time with his future life.

Although the narrator, Stephanos does not reveal the amount of the elapsed time between the moment of narration and his (the narrator's) neglect of his mother, there is a time gap between his neglect of his mother and the moment narration. This time gap is not overtly expressed in number to the readers so the readers infer from the moment narrative to find the omitted time from the narrative; because the narrator does not explicitly show the elapsed story time. Therefore, the duration of the text is more accelerated and it becomes zero duration where the story duration goes on its own pace. Here, readers can refer from the novel to understand the omitted time through analepsis. However, the narrator does not mention the amount of time in number, they can discover the implicit ellipsis of story time, and they can contextualize it with real time. In this type of narration, the narrator focuses on content to report and contextualize, leaving readers free to draw their own conclusions.

Thus, implicit ellipsis has a significant role to interpret the text critically and allows multiple possibilities of interpretations, because the readers are free from restrictions, and they can find the omitted time by themselves and they can contextualize it as they can.

## 6.3 Frequency

As expressed earlier in chapter two, frequency concerns the relationship between the occurrence of events in the story and their possible repetition of in the discourse. Here, we can discuss frequency in the possibilities of occurrence of events both in the story and in the novel.

### 6.3.1 Repetitive Narrative

Repetitive narrative, as its name indicates, refers to the narration of the same story event repeatedly in the discourse. It is also named as narrating n times what happen once. The death of Stephanos's father is presented repeatedly by different narrators in Dinaw's novel.

.....My brother –in –law, Shibrew Stephanos, was one of these men. He was beaten in front of his wife and two sons by government troops and then carried out of the house. The soldiers who arrested him said he was an anti-revolutionary because they had found some flyers in his office. Shiberew Stephanos was a good man and an excellent father.... (125).

Likewise, the following example demonstrates the same event, which is presented by different narrator:

My father's left eye has already swollen shut. He is struggling to keep his head from falling...the first tears are beginning to fall dawn from his face.... Of course, my father looks one the last time at my mother, brother, and me before he is escorted at gunpoint out the door. I am not even sure how much he was able to see at that point-whether our faces were distinguishable from one another, or if through the haze of figure. I like to think that is the way he saw us, his family, not as individual people, but as a world, one that he could faithfully claim to have created. He could not have seen Dawit's face. It was buried entirely in my chest... (129 – 130).

In these two examples, a similar event, that is, Stephanos's father's death has been presented by different narrators at different times from different contexts or perspective. In the first extract,

the narrator is also the character, who is Stephanos's uncle, Berhane; whereas, in the second example, the narrator is Stephanos. The narrators in both extracts are different, but their narrations concern the same event that happens once in the story. Here, the repeated event by different narrators is the main event of the story

This type of frequency has relationship with multiple focalizer. In the above two examples, two narrators narrate the same event of the story in different perspective, and also their narrations have stylistic variations. So, their narrations are not the same because of their ideological difference. This happens in the context of multiple focalization. This means that the death of Stephanos's father is focalized by Stephanos and his uncle, Berhane. At this point, readers give a single event (Stephanos's father's death) a great deal of attention.

Accordingly, each repetition (focalization) of the same event exhibits similarity with its kind, but it occurs in different context. And also each repetition of the same event by different narrators (focalizers) helps readers to understand the narrator-characters' (focalizers') ideology. The author employs this type of narrative to portray the ideological differences of the narrators and also their stylistic variation in the narration of events. Generally, the repetition of the same story event carries a special meaning for readers, because the narrators (focalizers) understand it differently.

### **6.3.2 Iterative Narrative**

Iterative narrative (narrating once what happened n times) is a mode of presenting the events once in the text that occurred many times in the story. In *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*, the narrator recounts once the repeated events in the story. We can look this type of frequency from the following extract:

At eight o'clock Joseph and Kenneth come into the store. They come almost every Tuesday. It's become a routine among the three of us without ever having acknowledging it as such (1).

This action occurs many times in the story, but it is mentioned once in the presentation. In the story, Joseph and Kenneth go to the store every Tuesday, but the narrator presents it once in the

novel to avoid unnecessary repetition. Furthermore, this study discusses it into three sections: external iterative (constant repetition), internal iterative (synthesizing iteration) and pseudo-iterative. Each categories of iterative frequency is synthesized with examples from the novel respectively.

External iterative occurs within a singular scene in the story. It is shown in the following extract from the novel: “Judith and Naomi came regularly at my store after that day” (27). As mentioned in the extract, Judith and Naomi go to the narrator-character, Stephanos’s store repeatedly, but Stephanos generalize it into one statement rather than narrating every single event with its respective repetition in the story. This repetition of incident implies a kind of homogeneity in the actual story events, where only one narrative statement is necessary to describe them all. Because, if the narrator narrates each incident many times as they happened in the story, it would be boring to readers. Therefore, the narrator saves the readers’ time by avoiding redundancy of information.

As mentioned in the above extract, the text time accelerates, where the story time moves its own speed. In this case, the durational aspect of the narrative constitutes summary mode of narration. Here, we can find summary and iterative frequency in one narrative passage. For this reason, iterative frequency has an implication of summary mode of narrative.

Internal iterative covers the period of the scene. The narration of internal iterative segment covers the scene of events in the story. For instance, the narrator- Stephanos presents repeated events by summed up in one statement with the period of the scene in the following way:

For the rest of December I watched Judith’s house for signs of life. I expected her and Naomi to return from the Connecticut at any moment, and the so every day I eagerly awaited their arrival. In the morning, on my way to the store, and again at end of the night, and on the occasion during the day I stared into the house (187).

Stephanos narrates the repeated events by summarizing it into one statement. Unlike external iterative, this presentation shows the time of the scene in which the repeated events happened in the story. This means Stephanos looks Naomi and her mother’s return from the Connecticut (the place where they go to Germany) on the way to the store, at the end of the night, and on the

occasion during the day, for the rest of December (after Christmas). He stares to their house many times in the story, but he narrates once as mentioned in the extract. Here, if the narrator repeats each event, it may not add a quality to the novel rather than making the novel boring. For this reason, the narrator provides the main events of the story to readers within a short time.

Pseudo- iterative frequency refers to the repeated events in the story, but it does not clearly depict the repeated events to readers. As mentioned below, readers do not easily understand whether events are repeated in the story:

We walked in silence around and around that park until it was time to return work or home. The last walk we took around that park was January 23, 1977, less than six months before he was killed (217).

In the above extract, the narrator does not explicitly present the repeated events in the story. However, the narrator-character, Stephanos walks to the park repeatedly with his father before he was killed in the story. This repetition of their walk to the park is not clearly noticed in presentation; it requires the readers' attention beyond the presented episode to understand the repeated events. As a result, readers give emphasis to the presentation to understand the recurrent events in the story.

In the above types of iterative frequency, the narrator narrates the repeated event in a constant perspective. This type of frequency has relationship with fixed focalization. As mentioned in the above extract, the events are narrated by single focalizer. Thus, these three examples demonstrate fixed focalization as well as iterative frequency.

### **6.3.3 Singulative Narrative**

Unlike the other two types of frequency, which are discussed earlier, this kind of frequency is when an event is narrated parallel with the story. In this kind of frequency, Narrating once what happened once refers to a narration of an event one time that occurred once in the story. This type of singulative frequency is a common way of narrative in *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*. Regarding singulative frequency, there are many events that appeared once both in the story and in the novel, but the study takes the following two examples to avoid repetition:

Judith ran down the steps. Her first words, the moment she saw that it was me the man had been referring to, were those of an introduction. Her instinct for diplomacy could not match. For a second she seemed to have completely forgotten why she had come down the steps in the first place, but as soon as she slowed her steps to a crawl and braced herself (207).

The narrator-character, Stephanos narrates an event once which happens once in the story. He presents Judith's activity once in a constant perspective. Here, an event occurs once both in the text and in the story, and this event is narrated in fixed focalization. Likewise, the following example depicts an event, which occurs once both in the story and in the presentation:

“I found the journal and a nice fountain pen to go along with it. I went to a French café off the main road and tiered out my inscription (159).”

The narrator-character, Stephanos presents the journal and the fountain pen that he gets in around the eve of Christmas. And also he narrates once that he goes to French cafe. These events occur once both in the story and in the novel. Here, the narrator narrates once the events that happen once purposefully, because the events are not much important to construct the theme of the text and the development of the plot. In this sense, the narrator narrates the events in the constant point of view. Thus, singulative telling constitutes fixed focalization. So far in this chapter, based on the three facets of narrative time, the study attempts to explore how the authors of the selected novels used this strategy to transfer their themes in their respective novels. The following is the summary of the major findings, conclusion and recommendation of the study.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the key findings of the study, to draw conclusions based on the findings given, and forward possible recommendations for future studies on the novels. Before drawing conclusion of the study, it is very important to summarize the key findings that have been extensively discussed in the preceding three consecutive analytical chapters.

#### 7.1 Summary of Major Findings

The primary objective of this study is to examine the narrative strategies employed in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Dinaw Mengistu's *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears* through the critical lens of contemporary narrative theory. The selected narrative strategies are narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time. Since treating all these strategies uniformly to both novels becomes redundant, the analysis focuses on the dominant strategies utilized in each novel. Relying on narrative theory, the study has come with the following findings.

##### Findings on Narrative Voice

The first strategy analyzed is narrative voice. Under this strategy, the degree of narrator's involvement in the story (homodiegetic or heterodiegetic narrators), and their receptibility to present the story (covert or overt narrators) has been discussed. Thus, the study found that Adichie's *Americanah* is narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator, whereas an overt narrator is noticeable in Dinaw's novel.

In *Americanah*, the narrator is outside the story who presents the story as an observer. In addition to the heterodiegetic nature of the narrator, this narrator of the novel is also dominantly omniscient who knows all the thoughts and actions of multiple characters at a time. However, this kind of narrator shifts to homodiegetic one in some of the blog posts. In some embedded stories like blogs, emails and letters, the story narrated by the major character herself.

Mirroring the fragmented and multifaceted experiences of diasporas, the utilization of omniscient narrator, here, helps to understand the text from different locations, time periods and cultural settings. Since she has the quality of observing multiple experiences, the narrator emphasizes the characters' psychological feelings and their physical activities by shifting between the homeland and the host country. Thus, this narrative flexibility helps readers to explore the themes like nostalgia, cultural hybridity and identity.

The second category of narrator types, based on their involvement in the story, is homodiegetic narrator. In this regard, Dinaw Mengistu's *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears* is dominantly narrated by this kind of narrators. The narrator is also autodiegetic since the protagonist of the story is also the protagonist of the story. By focusing on individual perspective, the utilization of such kind of narrators in diaspora fiction helps readers to deeply understand both the personal and collective dimensions of the diaspora. In the novel, the narration is almost the story of Estephanos's life in his host country, and his past memory in his homeland. Since the homodiegetic narrator's perspective is inherently limited to their own experiences, this strategy help readers to highlight the fragmented nature of diasporic identity and emphasize the subjective nature of memory and belonging.

Based on their perceptibility, narrators may be covert or overt. Parallel with their involvement in the story, Adichie's novel is dominantly narrated by covert narrator, whereas Dinaw's novel has an overt narrator.

### **Findings on Narrative Levels**

The second analytical chapter relies on the analysis of narrative levels. Since this strategy is dominantly noticed in Adichie's *Americanah*, especially the utilization of blogs in the novel, this chapter is highly dependent on the analysis of narrative levels in *Americanah*. The significant feature of embedded narrative in the stated novel is the appearance of blogs as embedded stories. Adichie's *Americanah*, introduces to a new approach to writing a frame narrative. With the recent advancement in technology, literature has become expanded into the virtual world in

the form of blogs on the internet. Adichie's novel makes use of this as an opportunity to incorporate blog writing in the novel. Although it is a new approach to an old literary device, incorporating blog posts throughout the novel is a form of frame narrative.

Hierarchically, we can get four narrative levels in the novel. The first degree narrative is the matrix narrative which tells about the existence of the blog, and the second degree narrative is the blog itself. The comments for the blog post and the reactions of those comments account for the third and fourth degree narratives.

We can draw the agents of each narrative as: the first degree narrator (the narrator) → the second degree narrator (the blogger) → the third degree narrator (the blog commenter) → the fourth degree narrator (the comment responder). Since the blog is the mouth of many diasporas in America, other than narrated by the extradiegetic narrator, this important concept is narrated by the blogger herself for emphasis to have the effect of intimacy with the readers.

The other nature of embedded narrative is epistolarity narratives. In addition to blogs, which is common in *Americanah*, the novels under study also employ other channels of communication like emails, letters and telephone conversations. It helps the characters to smooth their relationship, for readers as a cause of the conflict resolution in the plot structure, at large. In addition to the smoothening of their love story, emails help characters free themselves from different traumatic experiences. Unlike *Americanah*, Dinaw's novel is not rich in such kind of narratives. Except getting letters in some parts of the novel, other Medias like emails are not common.

Regarding to the relationship between narrative levels, the study found that the secondary narrative (the blog) and primary text have a close relationship. There is spatio-temporal continuity between the meta-diegesis (second degree narration) and diegesis (first degree narration). The study also found two functions of the embedded narratives suggested by Genette (1980) and Rimmon-Kenna (2002), i.e., explicative and actional functions. In addition, the embedded stories in the novel have aesthetic function, advancing oral story tradition, creation of multi-vocality and illusion of reality. The major themes addressed in the embedded texts include: love, race, identity, violence, immigration, sexual exploitation of women, sexuality and others.

## Findings on Narrative Time

The third narrative strategy selected for the study is narrative time. Focusing on the three facets of narrative time, the study endeavors to analyze both novels.

The first facet is **order**. Analepsis and prolepsis are terms used to explain order. The order of presentation in both novels does not correspond to the order of happenings of events in the story; it contains references back and forth in the discourse. Most of the time, the narrators narrate the events which happen in the past and such parts of the narrative can be called analepsis. Likewise, the narrators present the events which happen later: such parts of the narrative can be called prolepsis.

Analepsis, in all its kinds, is a dominant strategy in both novels. In Dinaw's novel, the protagonist of the story, Stephanos, frequently remembers his life in Ethiopia, his father's tragic death, and his flight from political instability. These flashbacks serve to juxtapose his past life with his present disillusionment, highlighting the unresolved trauma that shapes his worldview.

Prolepsis, on the other hand, is not a dominant strategy, especially in Dinaw's novel. The title of the novel in *Americanah*, is a mirror of showing diaspora's life in their migrated country. It emerges at the beginning of the novel which is a mock epithet for Ifemelu's personality. In Nigerian jargon, the term "Americanah" is an identity term that is premised on a person's previous experience of living in America. Prolepsis strategy is also used as a sign of return back stories. Ifemelu's move from Princeton to Trenton to braid her hair is an anticipation of her return from America to Nigeria. Ifemelu's story starts in prolepsis and decides to move back to Lagos. Prolepsis is also used as a strategy of advice or warnings given by different characters on the future events of the major characters.

The study also examines the durational aspect of narrative time. **Duration** refers to the relationship between the variable duration of events in the narration and their length of time in the story. Among the durational aspects, summary is a dominant strategy to present a story. Important concepts for the development of the story have been narrated through scene scenic narrative mode, help readers to understand the characters' feelings and experiences within equal

amount of story time and discourse time. Readers in the above conversations share the feelings equally with that of the characters. During pause, description of characters covers a wide range. Especially in *Americanah*, almost all characters are described along with their hair styles. It is surprising that almost half of the story is narrated in a hair salon.

Frequency is the third facet of narrative time which concerns the relationship between the occurrence of events in the story and their possible repetition of in the discourse. Among its types, singulative frequency is the dominant narrative strategy in both novels.

## 7.2 Conclusion

Through the lens of contemporary narrative theory, with a focus on the key concepts of narrative voice, narrative level and narrative time, this study aimed to explore the selected narrative strategies in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Dinaw Mengistu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bear*. Both novels employ complex, multi-layered narrative structures, demonstrating a rich interplay of narrative voices and temporal techniques to convey the intricate experiences of their characters.

Adichie's *Americanah* predominantly uses a heterodiegetic narrator with shifts to homodiegetic narrators in embedded narratives such as blogs, emails, and letters. This shift highlights the blending of traditional and modern narrative forms, with the blogs playing a central role in framing issues of race, identity, and migration. The multi-layered narrative, which includes blog entries and their comments, demonstrates the flexibility of narrative form in contemporary literature. Adichie's innovative use of blogs as a narrative device not only modernizes the storytelling technique but also enhances the thematic exploration of transnational identities and the complexities of diaspora.

Mengistu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, on the other hand, relies on an anathodiegetic narrator, where the protagonist Stephanos narrates his own story, drawing heavily on memory and trauma. The novel's use of analepsis allows for a deep examination of the protagonist's past in Ethiopia, juxtaposing it with his alienated existence in the United States. This temporal technique reinforces the themes of loss, memory, and the struggles of immigrant

life, portraying the unresolved emotional and psychological impacts of exile.

Both novels utilize narrative time to create non-linear structures that reflect the fragmented and multifaceted experiences of their protagonists. Through analepsis and prolepsis, the authors navigate between past and present, illustrating how the characters' histories continuously shape their present realities and future aspirations. In *Americanah*, prolepsis is used to foreshadow Ifemelu's return to Nigeria, adding layers of meaning to her journey of self-discovery. In contrast, Mengistu uses analepsis to convey Stephanos's ongoing internal struggle with the trauma of his father's death, demonstrating how the past irrevocably alters the present.

Ultimately, the narrative strategies employed in both *Americanah* and *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* allow for a nuanced exploration of identity, migration, and the immigrant experience. By intertwining these narrative strategies, Adichie and Mengistu give their readers a deeper understanding of the characters' internal and external worlds. These narrative choices enhance the thematic richness of the novels, offering insights into the human condition through the lens of migration and cultural dislocation.

The present researcher offers the following recommendations for future studies. In *Americanah*, upcoming research could explore how narrative strategies in contemporary African literature adapt to digital advancements and shifting communication methods, enriching discussions in global literary studies. Meanwhile, in *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, the characters' traumatic experiences present a promising avenue for further investigation.

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